

HAROLD EMERSON TURLEY

1911-1997

Harold Emerson Turley was born November 22, 1911, in Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, the youngest child of Edward Franklin Turley and Ida Elizabeth Eyring Turley. The siblings that Harold grew up with were older brothers Edward Vernon (the first president of the El Paso Stake), Clarence Franklin and Henry Eyring and sister Theresa. Harold's paternal grandfather was Isaac Turley, a boyhood friend of Joseph F. Smith – a friendship rooted in their boyhood (10 and 11 years of age) experiences together as they walked the trail of tears between Nauvoo and Winter Quarters following the martyrdom of Joseph's father Hyrum and Isaac's hero & friend, the Prophet Joseph. Isaac was one of the founders of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico – first, Turley's Camp in 1885, and then Colonia Juarez. Harold's great, grandfather, Theodore Turley (Isaac's father) was a valiant defender of the faith and his close friend, Joseph Smith, in Kirtland, Missouri and Nauvoo, joining the Church in Toronto, Canada in 1837, at the hands of Parley P. Pratt and Isaac Russell, accompanied by his family and many of his Methodist congregation as he opened the doors of his church (Methodist minister) to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Harold's maternal grandfather was Henry Eyring who emigrated from Germany and joined the Church in St. Louis in his youth, in the 1850's; served a mission to the Cherokee Nation; and then continued his pioneering odyssey first to the Salt Lake Valley and Central Utah, then to St. George and then, finally, to the newly established Mormon Colonies (Colonia Juarez) in Northern Mexico in the late 1880's. Harold shares this Eyring grandfather with his 1st cousin, Camilla Eyring Kimball, the eternal companion of President Spencer W. Kimball. Being born of goodly parents and blessed with a rich legacy, Harold's life was living proof of the wisdom his maternal grandmother, Mary Bommeli Eyring, shared with her young daughter, Ida (Harold's mother), against the backdrop of the apple orchards of Colonia Juarez - “apples do not fall far from the tree”.

Harold's early years were spent in the difficult ebb and flow of the exodus of most of the colonists and return of some back to the Colonies as a result of the Mexican Revolution & Civil Wars during the second decade of the 20th Century. Considering the instability of the times, he enjoyed an idyllic youth, developing a strong work ethic, e.g. milking 20 to 25 cows morning & night and working in the family orchards; developing his athletic talents as an outstanding basketball and baseball player on championship teams at the Juarez Stake Academy in his home town of Colonia Juarez; and enjoying the fun, frolic and comradeship of rural life including skinny dipping down the Aguas Verdes River.

Harold graduated from the Juarez Stake Academy (JSA) with the class of 1930. Included in his graduating class but of little interest to him at the time was his future bride and eternal sweetheart, Ireta Pierce, who came to Colonia Juarez from El Paso, the big city to the north on the international border, for her senior year in high school. Because of his great prowess in basketball, Harold was recruited by faculty and alumni of Gila Junior College (now Eastern Arizona College) in the Thatcher/Safford, Arizona area to go to college and play for the Gila basketball team, on scholarship. Being on athletic scholarship at that time meant tuition paid, a job secured to provide for his board and room and, in addition, he was able to satisfy his dairy product needs by arranging to milk his cousin's (Camilla Eyring Kimball) cow for a steady milk ration. When Harold

walked onto the Gila campus his reputation as an outstanding athlete had preceded him and the football coach convinced him to play football in addition to basketball and baseball. In the 1st game of the football season against Arizona State College in Tempe, which was the 1st football game in Arizona under lights, Harold was the starting halfback for Gila and made Ripley's "Believe It or Not" by playing in the 1st football game he ever saw. He was awarded many honors for his athletic achievements throughout his life and at Gila he lettered in five sports – football, basketball, baseball, track and tennis. Subsequently, at the University of Arizona, where he completed his undergraduate degree in physical education and business, he lettered in basketball on scholarship.

After graduating from the U of A, while waiting for a coaching job to open up, Harold went to work for a credit union in Phoenix and Northern Arizona repossessing automobiles. At what could be characterized as a low point or "valley" in his life, his eldest brother, Vernon, who was living, working and raising his family in El Paso, convinced Harold to move to El Paso where he could straighten out his legal status (securing his green card since he was a Mexican citizen – and remained so until just a few years before his death), secure a more substantive job and allow his brother to play the role of a celestial matchmaker in his life. It was in El Paso in 1937 that Harold quickly reconnected with Ireta May Pierce, who upon graduating from BYU earlier that spring with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, English major, had entered into a contract to teach high school English in Wyoming, and convinced her to relinquish that contract for an eternal, celestial marriage contract in the Arizona Temple on November 26, 1937.

This marriage joined two great church families with deep Mormon Colonies and early church roots. Ireta's father, Arwell L. Pierce, at age 34 in 1916 was ordained a High Priest by Apostle Anthony W. Ivins and set apart as 2nd counselor to Juarez Stake President Joseph C. Bentley. After serving as 1st counselor to Presiding Elder Philip H. Hurst from 1912 to 1916 in the organization of the first independent branch of the Church in El Paso, he succeeded Elder Hurst as El Paso Branch President in early 1918 and then was called to preside as Bishop of the newly organized El Paso Ward on October 11, 1918. Initially, the El Paso Ward was part of the Juarez Stake headquartered in Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico; then, in 1919, the El Paso Ward was transferred from the Juarez Stake to the St. Joseph Stake and years later from the St. Joseph Stake to the Mt. Graham Stake both of which were headquartered in Arizona's Gila Valley. At the time of Harold's marriage to Ireta, her father was well on his way to completing his 24 year term as Bishop of the El Paso Ward prior to his call as President of the Mexican Mission (encompassing all of Mexico & Central America) in 1942. Ireta's mother, Mary Brentnall Done Pierce, served as Relief Society President of the El Paso Ward for that same 24 year period. It was Ireta's grandfather, Isaac Washington Pierce, who with his family became the first LDS family to settle in the El Paso area – arriving on the international border from Colonia Diaz in 1897, and settling in Ciudad Juarez across the border from El Paso. In concert with the developing timber and sawmill operations of the mountain colonies in Chihuahua, Isaac established a retail lumber business in Ciudad Juarez as an outlet for the colonists' timber, sawmilling and lumber operations. At Isaac's death in 1906, his son Arwell took over the business for the benefit of Isaac's

families and developed it into one reflecting his own character and talents; one that ultimately provided entrepreneurial opportunities for his son-in-law, Harold Turley.

In El Paso, Harold worked a short time for Standard Oil and then joined with his father-in-law as a junior partner, along with Ireta's brothers, Merlin, Arthur Clyde and Wendell, in the family business both in the mountains of northern Chihuahua (timber, sawmilling and lumber operations on a 63 section cattle ranch at Tres Treinta on the Nor Oeste RR) and the retail lumber business, farming and farm implement business on both sides of the international border. As those business activities and entrepreneurial opportunities evolved over the years, Harold played an important role, historically, in El Paso, Ciudad Juarez and northern Chihuahua in business, ranching, farming, horticulture and banking.

Following Harold's death in 1997, in the summer of 1999 during a last visit with Harold's oldest living brother, Clarence (in his 100th year), the statement was evocably made, "I am so proud of my little brother. He served the Lord and the Church fully and without question. He never said "no" to a calling. I was so proud of him and, though he was my younger brother, I looked up to him all my life." Harold's service and callings in the Church, chronologically, included the following: Working with the youth in the YMMIA & El Paso Ward YMMIA Superintendent; Mt. Graham Stake Missionary and Seventy; coach of the El Paso Ward M-Men basketball team including the team that went to the All-Church Basketball Tournament held at BYU in Provo, Utah; ordained a High Priest by Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith on September 18, 1950 and set apart as 1st counselor to Bishop Joseph Kleinman of the El Paso 1st Ward (at the time of the division of the El Paso Ward, the only ward in Texas at that time, into the El Paso 1st & 2nd Wards of the Mt. Graham Stake); called as Bishop of the El Paso 1st Ward in March of 1955 and ordained a Bishop by Elder Spencer W. Kimball on April 1, 1955 during General Conference time; set apart as the first Bishop of the El Paso 5th Ward by Elder Mark E. Peterson on November 21, 1959; set apart as the first president of the West Mexican Mission by President David O. McKay in Salt Lake City on October 12, 1960, and released as mission president on July 14, 1964; counselor to El Paso Stake YMMIA Superintendent, Harold Mullen, 1964-65; set apart as El Paso Stake President by Elder Marion G. Romney on August 29, 1965 with release as stake president on August 25, 1974 (at Harold's release the El Paso Stake was split into the El Paso and Las Cruces stakes); ordained a Patriarch by Elder Bruce R. McConkie on August 25, 1974 (El Paso Stake Patriarch, 1974-96); set apart as Regional Representative, Mexico South – Central America Area (full time mission) by Elder Bruce R. McConkie on August 14, 1980, and released from that calling by President Ezra Taft Benson on February 13, 1983.

Besides the Gospel and their eternal relationship with each other and the Lord, the greatest treasure in the lives of Harold & Ireta was their family. Outstanding success was truly theirs measured against the dictum of President David O. McKay that "no amount of success can compensate for failure in the home."

A watershed experience Harold had with the Holy Ghost and the Lord in his early 30's was both instrumental and reflective of his commitment to the Lord in this life, his "second estate". It was a simple, life threatening experience on a lake bottom somewhere

in northern Chihuahua between the Turley/Pierce ranch in the mountain settlements of Bella Vista & Las Playas and the “West Texas Town” of El Paso. Harold was on the way back to his family in El Paso from an extended work stay at the ranch in his open jeep (no roll bars and just his suitcase in the back seat of the jeep) when he came to a lake bottom which tempted him to open up the throttle and speed across what he thought to be a dry lake bottom – an attempt to make up time given the slow going on this normal 12 hour trip. Halfway across the lake bottom he heard a voice – “slow down” – but he discounted it since he saw no reason to slow down. Again the voice – “slow down” – but again he paid it little mind. A third time, the voice came to him in a very audible manner – “slow down!” – and this time he paid attention and began to slow the jeep down but not in time to avoid a wet rain slick on the lake bottom which caused him to roll the jeep.

When he regained consciousness, Harold found himself on his back underneath the jeep sinking into the rain soaked lake bottom with his suitcase on end holding up the back of the jeep and his leg, bent the wrong way, holding up the jeep’s front end. He was in excruciating pain and sinking slowly into a quicksand-like quagmire with his very life at risk and no one around in that wilderness place to rescue him. His intense prayer at that moment in time, speaking directly (almost face to face) to his Heavenly Father, was like Enos of old, “if you will preserve my life and allow me to rejoin my family (who desperately need me) I will dedicate my life to Thee and the building up of Thy Kingdom here upon the Earth!” Somehow Harold was able to wriggle out from under the jeep before it collapsed sinking into the lake bottom. He tried to walk out during the next few hours on his badly damaged leg but collapsed from the excruciating pain. It would not have been unusual for days to go by without seeing any other people or traffic on that desolate road. Finally, toward the end of the day, a pick-up with 2 Mexicanos came along from the other direction, discovered Harold and then the jeep farther up the road. They could not or would not take him to civilization but did help him right the jeep. Harold then drove the jeep the rest of the way into Ciudad Juarez & El Paso (6-8 hours “in the saddle”), stopped in front of the family home at 3110 Pershing Drive in El Paso and collapsed from pain and fatigue where Ireta found him. His prayer was answered and his commitment to the Lord indelibly confirmed.

Harold & Ireta left El Paso in November of 1996 for the Farmington, Utah home of their daughter, Luana, with their son, Brent, driving them to the airport. There was a sad, philosophical look of goodbye in Harold’s eyes, knowing that he would not return, as we drove on Interstate 10 from the Upper Valley by Mount Cristo Rey, the smelter, UTEP (formerly Texas Western College) on the left and Ciudad Juarez on the right, past downtown El Paso and then to the newer east side of town and El Paso International Airport. Harold passed away two months later in Farmington, Utah on January 12, 1997. His funeral was held in his beloved El Paso 5th Ward chapel in the Upper Valley and his mortal remains are at rest in Restlawn Cemetery joining his daughter, Maureen, and son, Kurt, in death’s repose, to be joined by his eternal companion, Ireta, 3 ½ years later.