

Chapter 2

Sports and Recreation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

As with other religions, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon or LDS) encouraged sports and recreation. While these activities were not part of religious worship, Church leaders and members felt that they served important community, fellowshiping, missionary, and character-building purposes. This chapter will examine their role in LDS culture. From the beginning of the Church in the nineteenth century, but especially from 1900 to 1971 games and other play activities were an important part of church life, especially for teenagers and young adults.

History of Recreation and Sports

Joseph Smith Jr., founder of the LDS Church, taught that religion involved all aspects of life. He enjoyed arm wrestling and pulling sticks (a game similar to arm wrestling except participants put the soles of their feet together, held a stick in their hands, and tried to pull over the opponent). He also promoted ball, music, and drama. Mormon scholar Rex Skidmore overstated his case when he argued, “Joseph Smith must be considered as one of the outstanding leaders in the modern recreation movement.”¹ In contrast, Ruth Andrus wrote in her dissertation that Joseph Smith’s support of recreation was practical. He was involved in play, but he did not preach on the subject.²

Smith’s successor Brigham Young expanded the Church’s view of recreation. He promoted and practiced physical activities. To make that possible, he put a gymnasium in his Utah home and encouraged his children to exercise. He believed play should be where members could “enjoy the Spirit of the Lord.” In other words, he felt Mormon recreation should be with other Latter-day Saints in Mormon homes and meeting places. Church members should not be in taverns and bars, where LDS standards were not followed. By not playing in those settings, Young believed, young people would have “mastery over [themselves] and command the influences around [them].” He explained that it was not “[their] lawful privilege to yield to anything in the shape of amusement until [they had] performed every duty and obtained the power of God to enable [them] to withstand and resist

all foul spirits” and “obtained . . . the blessings of the Holy Spirit.” He encouraged “eight hours work, eight hours sleep, [and] eight hours recreation.”³

Recreational activities became more important over time. At the turn of the twentieth century, some Mormons left their agricultural roots and moved to cities to work in business and industry. Salt Lake City was growing. In addition, the first generation of converts had died and with them some of the religious zeal. Their children did not always share their parents’ enthusiasm for religion. LDS youth began turning to non-Mormon programs for entertainment and education. Programs like the Boy Scouts of America, the YMCA, or local clubs and debating societies kept young men off the streets but not necessarily in church.

In 1901 Church President Joseph F. Smith made the following observation: “Where our children ought to be growing up true to the covenants of the Gospel, . . . we find them . . . associated with the elements of the world.” He especially complained that other organizations sponsored recreational activities on Sunday.⁴ To avoid the worldly influence, he encouraged young Mormons to play at church. He explained in 1902, “The Church is provided with so many priesthood organizations that only those can be recognized. . . . No outside organization is necessary.”⁵ Church leaders continued to express the same views. In 1932, President Heber J. Grant said, “I am grateful that no Latter-day Saint upon the face of the earth needs to go anywhere outside the church to solve any problem whatever, moral, intellectual, physical, mental [or] spiritual.”⁶

Researcher Scott Kenney explains the situation, “The emphasis on ‘Christian nurture’ (in Protestant parlance) [or Muscular Christianity to use another popular term] . . . reflected an unintentional opening toward American theological currents” for Latter-day Saints. Muscular Christianity, or “Muscular Mormonism” as historian Richard Ian Kimball called the Mormon adaption, focused on young men and boys who most Americans viewed as not naturally spiritual. Most felt that young women and girls were naturally spiritual and not a problem.⁷

As Heber J. Grant pointed out, the LDS recreational program was churchwide. Owen Rich, who taught at Brigham Young University and served on the church-wide Young Men Mutual Improvement Association General Board, claimed that the Church's programs "provided social and leadership skills" to those in "communities isolated by limited communication and transportation." Rich grew up in Paris, Idaho, in the 1920s and did not have experiences outside his community until he went to college. Through the LDS Church's programs in Paris, he had "training in music, dance, speech, leadership, athletics, and outdoor skills." Rich concluded, "I personally feel that much of the success I have had in my adult life I can attribute to my youthful [church] training."⁸ William Friden, who grew up in "extreme northern California" in the 1960s, agreed. The weekly activity days gave him a chance to dance, camp, and perform away from what he called "worldly culture."⁹

Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association and Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association

The first LDS church programs for teenagers in Utah were the Young Ladies' (later Young Women's) Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA or YWMIA) and the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA).¹⁰ In 1869, Brigham Young created an organization for his daughters and other young LDS women. He explained, "I have long had it in my mind to organize the young ladies in Zion [because] . . . there is a need for [them] to get a living testimony. Young men obtain this while on missions, but this way is not opened to the girls." He expanded that vision to include young men in 1875. Brigham Young told church leaders, "Let the key-note of your work be the establishment in the youth of individual testimony." This included "the development of gifts" and "the cultivati[on] of knowledge and an application of the eternal principles" to life.¹¹

YMMIA Goals

While the YLMIA and the YMMIA started around the same time, the organizations developed in different directions. In 1904, Willard Done outlined three major YMMIA goals that

had been present almost from the beginning:

“The development of religious faith, knowledge, and action.”

“Securing of general culture outside of theological work.”

“Development of proper social intercourse and recreation.”

To meet these goals, the leaders needed young men to attend church meetings. So the YMMIA, like the Mormon Relief Society and Sunday School, sent out local missionaries to train workers and convince young men to attend activities. When that effort proved problematic in 1905, the YMMIA adopted a new theme, “Every member a missionary” and encouraged all those who took part in the activities to invite others to attend.¹²

At about the same time the missionary program ended, Church President Joseph F. Smith introduced a correlation program. The general auxiliary boards had controlled local organizations. If a local YMMIA leader in a ward had a question, he contacted his stake YMMIA leaders and then the organization’s general board. Smith felt the focus should be on the priesthood instead of the individual organizations. So he asked local auxiliaries to refer questions to their local priesthood leaders. The change now required a ward YMMIA leader to contact his bishop and stake president. To use business terminology, Smith moved the Church from a horizontal integration, where the auxiliaries were separate corporations under a large umbrella, to a vertical integration, where the priesthood controlled all aspects of church activity.¹³

Following the same pattern, Smith started a “New Movement” in 1908 that gave the priesthood the responsibility to teach young men theology. In response, the YMMIA General Board passed a resolution: “Owing to the fact that the Priesthood quorums have formally taken up the study of theology, the YMMIA [will] take up educational, literary, and recreational studies, permeated by religious thought.” These activities included music, art, “social culture and refinement,” and “athletic work.” The YMMIA leaders stressed that “recreation and amusement are indispensable to

our social and moral development, but should be under the same vigilance and control as our religious training.”¹⁴

These programs took several forms. According to historian Richard Ian Kimball, “The creation of intrachurch athletic meets and leagues as well as the addition of gymnasiums to local meetinghouses and the construction of a state-of-the-art athletic training facility [Deseret Gym] in downtown Salt Lake City furthered the work of the church by teaching lessons of cooperation and teamwork through sporting events.”¹⁵ As part of the new program, the Ensign Stake in Salt Lake City introduced sports in their new gymnasium and the Granite Stake in Salt Lake Valley started an annual music festival. E. J. Milne, a member of the YMMIA stake board and the physical director at the LDS University and Dr. E. G. Gowans created the Ensign Stake program. Boys met at the university gym twice a month for theology and an hour of sports. When priesthood quorums started studying theology, YMMIA turned more to athletics.¹¹

Athletics became a way to bring young men to church. Lyman Martineau explained at a training meeting in 1910, “If our organizations will take up athletics . . . and invite the boys that were inclined to be wayward, . . . in due time these very boys would become enrolled members in the organizations.” Stakes and wards reaped the success. For example, in 1902 a church athletic club in Colonia Juarez, Mexico, controlled swearing by not allowing those who used improper language to take part. In Duchesne, Utah the church basketball league convinced young men not to use tobacco. In Box Elder Stake church baseball brought families together and taught skills.¹²

YWMIA Goals

The Young Women’s organization faced different challenges than the YMMIA. Some single women moved to Salt Lake City seeking employment, and the LDS Church provided housing for them. But leaders believed most young women would stay at home until they married. Like Protestant groups, many Mormon leaders felt that girls were not as wild as boys. The leaders also

felt that the girls would participate in church programs, so local or general authorities did not call YWMIA missionaries. Smith's correlation also affected women differently. While they still worked through local leaders, women did not have priesthood to teach theology. The YWMIA goals therefore included religious and social programs.

Because of these differences, the YWMIA leaders resisted movements to combine with the women and men. Brigham Young had stated, "If the [YM and YW] Associations are mixed, they will become mere courting meetings." By 1900 though, the YMMIA wanted young women involved because boys attended if they could interact with girls. Two years later the two organizations created a committee to consider cooperation. The YWMIA agreed to some joint programs, including June Conference—an annual meeting for training YMMIA and YWMIA leaders. In 1929 the two organizations' publications *The Improvement Era* and the *Young Ladies' Journal* combined under the title of the men's magazine.¹³

Scouts and LDS Church Programs

While Mormon leaders usually avoided secular organizations, they adopted the Boy Scouts of America. The scouting movement started in England in 1907 and came to the United States in 1910. Almost immediately LDS General Authority B. H. Roberts and a YMMIA committee investigated the organization. The committee reported, "We are already provided with [an] organization to cover the field of activities proposed by 'Scouting.'" The church leaders especially feared that the ages covered were not the same in the Church and in Scouts.

But Mormon leaders recognized that they needed something as exciting as the Boy Scouts for boys twelve to fourteen. Otherwise they joined Scouts and were not involved in MIA later. After a few months of experimenting, the Church announced "MIA Scouts" for boys twelve to eighteen. In 1913 the Church officially sponsored the Boy Scouts of America when the national organization agreed to adapt its programs to meet Mormon requirements for spiritual growth as well as

recreational activities.¹⁴

At the same time that the YMMIA considered the Boy Scouts, the YWMIA looked at the requirements for the Camp Fire Girls, an organization started by YMCA leader Luther Gulick and his wife. The Church used the Camp Fire summer program in 1913, but the next year local leader Charlotte Stewart of the Ensign Stake complained that it was too complex. She suggested that the Church use her stake's simpler program. The YWMIA tried to convince the Camp Fire Girls to modify their program, but the national organization refused. However, the Gulicks did allow the Church to use some of the Camp Fire Girls ideas in developing an LDS program for girls ages twelve to fourteen called Bee-Hives.¹⁵

Age Divisions

Over the years MIA leaders recognized that girls and boys worked better with young people their own age. Twelve year olds and sixteen year olds simply did not share the same interests. Since Boy Scouts initially was for those boys in their early teens, the Church started a Vanguard program in 1927 for boys fourteen to eighteen. The Boy Scouts of America was impressed and adopted the LDS program in 1935, renaming it Explorers. The YWMIA counterpart to the boys' programs for older teens was called Juniors. Later the YWMIA split the group into Mia Maids (14-16) and Laurels (16-18).

MIA leaders also provided opportunities for men and women in their twenties—both single and married. The YWMIA announced the “senior girls” program in September 1922. Ruth May Fox, then a counselor in the general presidency, suggested the name Gleaner, referring to Ruth's gleaning in the Old Testament. The women used that imagery to encourage all young women to join and “bind their sheaves” together. The women also collected genealogy and family history in their “Treasures of Truth.”¹⁶

Similarly, the YMMIA General Board announced an experimental senior men's program for

those in their twenties at June conference in 1921. Church members suggested several names including Fellows, Nephites, and Mutual Boys. Finally the board suggested M Men. No one is sure what the M stood for at first. But according to a twenty-fifth anniversary article, “The ‘M’ was designated to stand for ‘Mormon,’ Mutual, missionary, moral, manly, magnificent, model—in fact, any desirable quality or characteristic beginning with the letter ‘M.’” The 1932 theme for the M Men was “thoroughly spiritual and at the same time recreational in character.”¹⁷

Recreation

The YMMIA and YWMIA programs included activities that helped members to be well-rounded and involved. But sometimes responsibilities overlapped with other church organizations. At the turn of the twentieth century, each ward had an amusement committee that coordinated local programs. With the MIA activity program success, the Young Men’s General Board suggested that the First Presidency either appoint a social committee with representatives from all auxiliaries, create a new general board for recreation, or assign all recreational activities to the MIA. Initially the general church leaders said the current program worked fine.¹⁸ Then in 1911, Church leaders appointed Dr. John Harris Taylor to direct churchwide MIA recreational programs. Two years later Oscar A. Kirkham traveled throughout the church—mostly in Utah and the surrounding states—as the “mental and spiritual director” and to encourage activities.¹⁹

Leadership

To carry out all the programs, the YMMIA and YWMIA organizations involved many leaders. It started with the General Boards for each organization. By the 1970s when the YMMIA and YWMIA boards were disbanded they included one hundred twenty members—sixty for each organization. The groups were divided into athletics for men and sports for women. (Athletics were competitive; sports were character building; the popular belief at the time was that women should not compete like men but still needed physical fitness.) In addition, board members specialized in

speech, dance, drama, music, and other MIA activities.²⁰

For example, Owen Rich served on the YMMIA board from 1958 to 1973. In addition to attending a weekly meeting, he wrote and planned activities for wards and for regional and June conferences. Rich, a BYU speech professor, was very proud of his chapter on “Successful Communication” for the 1964-65 *Speech Director’s Guide*. He also traveled to meetings with General Authorities throughout the United States and to Australia and Asia.²¹

Training

As the LDS Church developed recreational programs, local leaders wanted assistance. In response, Brigham Young University and the Utah State Agricultural College developed summer programs to train recreational leaders and Mormons frequently attended.²² But the main time to teach MIA leaders was at the Church’s annual June Conference in Salt Lake City. The meetings started in 1900 and brought together leaders from throughout the Church to learn the themes and activities for the coming year. Summer was often a vacation time for the youth programs, so June Conference provided a chance for leaders to get ready for the new program that started in September, the same time as the American school year.

June Conference was a big event from the beginning, and it grew bigger each year. General Authorities and board members preached and gave workshops on many topics. The centennial year of the YWMIA (1969), for example, included a film *Pioneers and Petticoats* that showed the advantages of MIA over a century, a formal dance with the Utah Symphony performing, a dance festival with dances representing the time period of each YWMIA president, and an open house at the Lion House, where the organization started.²³

Types of Activities

YMMIA and YWMIA incorporated many recreational activities including sports, drama, dance, speech, and music. The general leaders hoped the youth would be involved in all the

programs and suggested an activity for each month. These included an opening social, a harvest festival, a musical, a debate, a play, and a pageant. These churchwide activities took place in the fall, spring, and winter. Local wards determined if they would have summer programs.²⁴ According to historian Richard Kimball, MIA was “an almost complete recreation program.”²⁵

Above all else, general and local church leaders encouraged participation. In 1932 they announced a family competition where each person twelve and older participated in three activities. The winner would be the ward with the highest percentage of people involved. The *Church News* listed possible activities: "baseball, tennis, horseshoes, swimming, archery, vanball (volleyball), group horseback riding, reading circle, debates, polo, glee clubs, choruses, quartets, dramatics, folk dancing, indoor baseball (softball), soccer, instrumental groups, treasure of truth or my story books, rug making, handicrafts, furniture repairing, embroidering, social dancing, hiking, and horseback relays." While these activities were not divided by gender, the suggested service projects were. Young men could do outdoor service projects such as cleaning up parking lots or baseball fields. Young women could dry fruits or vegetables. Given the typical division of labor in the early twentieth century, it was probably assumed which activities boys or girls, men or women would have been involved in.²⁶

A 1930 study guide in the *Improvement Era* showed the concerns of young men and young women taking part in recreational activities. The instructions under “Physical Activities” were “The problem of choosing physical activities for different groups, classifying according to age, height, weight classifications and physical fitness, also according to ability, should be determined by group leaders selected from the group.” Approved, doubtful, and condemned activities for age groups followed. “Pubescent or adolescent girls” could play volleyball, basketball, indoor baseball, tennis, golf, and field hockey. (A total of twenty-one games were listed.) But competitive basketball and soccer for young girls were discouraged along with outdoor baseball. Football and basketball and

soccer using “boys’ rules” were “to be condemned” for young girls. The “mature” girls could play basketball and soccer with girls’ rules, but football still was not suggested. There also were lists for boys of junior high school age, senior high school age, and college age. No sports were listed as doubtful or condemned. The individual recreational activities for adult women included walking, tennis, golf, gardening and dancing. Women team sports were volleyball, women’s basketball, and indoor baseball.²⁷

According to general church leaders, these programs helped young Latter-day Saints face nearly every problem. A song “Glow in MIA” presented at a music seminar in 1961 explained how. “Are you rushed? Are you troubled and worried? Are you busied, are you burdened and hurried? Mister Spark fills your system with current, with a fuse, with a plug, with a light. . . . Your tasks will be so breezy as you glow each mutual night.”²⁸

Leaders taught the youth that they could have fun and still follow church standards. But having fun was not the only goal. Each activity also taught core values. A 1962 leadership filmstrip taught leaders how the programs helped girls. Some of the questions it posed to leaders included: “Today as they participate with you in athletics and sports, . . . are their hearts and minds being touched as they learn to love their fellow men [and] . . . learn to play fair?”

“Today [as] you teach them how to act in a play . . . do you reach their minds and hearts so they know how to act when on a date, when they are angry, or when friends asked them to go against church teachings?”

“Today [as] you teach them to sing . . . in a music festival . . . are their hearts and minds being touched so they want to praise their Heavenly Father in song?”

“Today [as] you teach them to dance do they learn the modest way to dress and perform?”²⁹

All of these activities were to help young people with “an abundance of ability, energy, enthusiasm, curiosity and creative imagination—a combination that is challenging to the most capable

youth leaders." MIA activities sought to channel these qualities. "Dance, drama, music, speech, sports, and camping" provided "practical and constructive skills [in] the companionship of young people with the same interests and ideals." So every "joyful activity" from "singing in a chorus, acting in a play, participating in a speech competition, performing in a dance festival, playing on a volleyball team, [or] spending a week at camp" gave "vehicles for self expression, self development, and social maturity" and taught ways to "plan, work and play harmoniously with others."³⁰

Play Theory

Mormon leaders drew on their own experiences to develop these programs for youth. For example, Mormons used their theology to support recreational activities including the belief the body was an important part of the whole person and that God has a glorified body similar to humans. Through religious living, Mormons believed that they could become like God. To become like God, Mormons needed to develop their minds, bodies, and spirits.³¹

Mormon leaders also adopted recreation theory from national organizations. In 1920, Luther Gulick published *A Philosophy of Play*, which explained that children evolved from individual play to competition to team work. He included a chart that showed how children's interest in activities changed from birth to age twelve. Joseph Lee's *Play in Education* (1921) and Edwin A. Kirkpatrick's *Fundamentals of Child Study* (1917) discussed children's basic instincts. Lee defined an instinct as an "innate tendency toward conscious action" and "play instinct" as "not toward a physical satisfaction [but] . . . an instinct toward an ideal."³²

Adopting some of these theories from these well-known authors, LDS leaders published a *Recreation Bulletin*, "a reference book providing for presiding officers and for stake and ward MIA committees." The 1925 edition listed seven urges. Mormon leaders may have been uncomfortable with Lee's "instincts," especially if it referred to "reactions below the conscious level." An urge may have implied more control. The seven urges were (1) physical, (2) rhythmical, (3)

constructive/manual/creative, (4) environmental, (5) dramatic, (6) linguistic, and (7) social. Like Gulick, the LDS leaders developed the activities into age groups, but they looked at childhood, early adolescence (12-15), middle adolescence (15-17), later adolescence (17-24), and adult.³³

In using the word “urges” rather than “instincts,” LDS leaders emphasized positive behavior that showed self-control. For example, Mormon leaders focused on dramatics rather than fighting, one of Lee’s instincts. In 1910 the MIA General Board discouraged MIAs who had included boxing, explaining that even in exhibition “the number of participants [was] limited and the spectators [derived] no benefit. Its tendency [was] to degenerate into fighting.”³⁴

Rules

As in other Christian churches, the LDS Church focused on young men’s recreational activities. Women were seen as more spiritually inclined and would attend church on their own. Boys and men, however, had to be offered other activities to come to church. To make sure that athletics helped to bring the boys and men together at church, the YMMIA established rules. Each year the organization published a handbook that carefully spelled out the game, and, more important, the rules for participation. As the 1964-65 YMMIA athletic manual explained, “This athletic program **MUST** maintain the high standards of our Church. This is the **ONLY** way it can continue.”³⁵ While there were separate guidelines for each sport, they all followed the same pattern. The rules were clarified over the years as questions came up. All of the changes that took place, however, refined guidelines for participation, clean living, and fair play.

The rules were set up to meet the purpose and objectives of the YMMIA athletic programs. The overriding purpose was to make LDS young men the “finest, cleanest, healthiest in all the world.” The 1952-53 handbook declared, “Athletics should be exemplars.”³⁶ The five objectives were:

“1. Promotion of good clean living habits.

2. Development of desirable social attitudes.
3. Development of well adjusted personality.
4. Inclusion of every young man in the program.
5. Development in proficiency and appreciation and knowledge of the various sports.”³⁷

To achieve these ends, the rules carefully spelled out participation requirements: attending church meetings, observing church standards, following the Word of Wisdom, meeting age requirements, and living within ward boundaries. LDS leaders also hoped to focus on the joy of playing as much as winning and living the gospel in everyday life. While of course the youth wanted to win, the leaders were more concerned about the games’ impact on a well-rounded life than on the final score. Church Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith explained in August 1956: “We as your servants are trying not to build great athletic leagues or great festivals only, but we are trying to reach the hearts and shape the lives of young people in planting testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ that will guide them throughout every phase of their lives.”³⁸

Participation

The Church’s athletic program was designed to provide an opportunity for everyone who wanted to take part in recreational activities. While schools and community sports could meet some of that need, there were many young Mormons who did not qualify for these competitive leagues. To level the playing field, the church’s athletic committee set age requirements. Initially basketball, for example, was for M Men, so only men between seventeen and twenty-four could play. Later the Church added a junior division for teenage boys and then a college league. In 1952-53 those under age thirty could be exceptions and allowed to play. That later became the official cutoff age. In 1957-1958 softball rules allowed seventeen and eighteen year olds to play junior or senior ball depending on the need of the ward.³⁹

Besides age, there were strict rules about not including those who participated in school

sports. Basketball was the major concern since so many schools had teams. In 1952-53 no one who had lettered in basketball at school or played four quarters or equivalent minutes could take part in church basketball. Later the rule allowed junior college and college graduates to play. In 1958-59 the rules allowed only two four-year college basketball lettermen who were Mormons on a team and only one on the floor at a time. In 1964-65 those who had ever played on a high school, junior college, or university team could not take part in church sports. In 1969-70 lettermen from junior colleges were allowed as long as they were no longer students. Those from universities were not allowed to play although they could coach or referee.⁴⁰

While church leaders recognized that sports could be a good missionary tool, the main objective was to provide activities for church members. There were limits on the number of non-Mormons who could play on a team and how many could play at a time. In 1952-53, for example, senior softball players had to be Melchizedek Priesthood holders or male members age nineteen or older. Junior softball players had to be between the ages of twelve and eighteen. During the games, there had to be at least six Mormons on the field at all times. The 1958-59 rules simplified the rule to a majority of LDS players on the field at all times. The rules set the number of Mormon players again in 1964-65: junior and senior basketball required four Mormons on the court; junior and senior volleyball required five; and junior softball had to have seven Mormons on the field and the pitcher had to be a Latter-day Saint.⁴¹

Since the program was church sponsored, all players—Mormons and non-Mormons—had to attend church meetings. The number of required meetings changed over the years. In 1952-53 the players had to go to at least four church meetings (sacrament meetings or MIA) a month. New players had to have been to at least four “complete” MIA meetings before the first of the year or before participating in any stake league games. The meeting requirement was more closely defined in 1958-59. Players had to attend two MIA, one priesthood, one sacrament meeting, and one Sunday

School for two months before starting play and then had to go to six complete meetings (eliminating the possibility of leaving early or arriving late) every month during the season. In 1964-65 nonmembers were no longer required to attend priesthood meetings. But all athletes had to go to five complete church meetings and two of them had to be MIA. Practice could not count as an MIA meeting. In 1969-70 nonmembers could play for a year if they started in September. But if they started later in the year, they were eligible to compete only through the end of August.⁴²

MIA leaders also wanted to avoid “super teams,” where excellent players combined their efforts. While some teams recruited players, that was not the goal and the players had to move within the ward boundaries. That was because a major goal of the athletic program was creating a community for ward quorum members by providing opportunities for them to not only worship but also to play together. To meet that goal, all players had to live in the ward boundaries and attend the meetings in that ward. Recognizing that not all men stayed in the same place, the rules included guidelines about players who moved, saying they could continue to play for the same basketball team if they had played half the season in the first ward.⁴³

The 1956-57 rules said that a player who had moved had to have permission from his old and new bishop. The 1958-59 manual clarified some additional questions. Players could remain with the former team after a move unless it was geographically impossible. But they had to sit out for a month after the move. To prevent a lot of new move-ins to improve a team, the new rules defined a permanent member as someone who had lived in the ward for two years before the athletic season began. For basketball, there had to be at least three permanent ward members on the floor; for softball there needed to be six on the field.⁴⁴

Clean Living

Mormon leaders believed that living church standards helped the young men physically and spiritually. According to the 1952-53 handbook, “Players on teams to be eligible for church

tournament competition must be non-users of liquor and tobacco and of good moral character.” Coaches had to following the same rule. In addition, players were “to keep faithfully regular training rules and maintain Church standards.”⁴⁵

Purposes of MIA Recreation

Mormon leaders though wanted to serve more than just basic instincts or urges. The Church’s program had, according to Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, “one objective and that is the salvation of souls.” In 1968 he explained that the sport and recreational program was based on four beliefs:

- 1) According to the Book of Mormon “men are, that they might have joy.”
- 2) Recreation is a way to get joy.
- 3) Young people will take part in good or bad recreational activities based on what is provided.
- 4) Church leaders can help them choose good recreation.⁴⁶

In 1970 Marion G. Romney, also an apostle, stressed again, “The Church athletic programs are designed and intended to build character among those who compete. The programs are conceived with the intent to assist you and the others who participate in them to succeed in their life’s mission.”⁴⁷

The rationale for church sports and recreation remained throughout the years. Church leaders frequently explained the objectives in talks and manuals. They stressed spiritual and social goals. The spiritual side included testimony building, fellowshiping, overcoming the world, reactivating members, and converting nonmembers. Social goals included building character, practicing sportsmanship, and developing talents.

Spiritual

Testimony

Mormons frequently quote a Joseph Smith translation of an ancient papyri in which the Lord

told Moses, "This is my work and my glory--to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). They believe any activity in and out of the Church has eternal consequences. In 1951, LaRue C. Longden, the second counselor in the YWMIA, explained that the main reason for MIA "wholesome recreational activities" was to help young people develop a belief in the LDS Church.⁴⁸ If the youth participated in sports and recreation, Longden felt they would attend church meetings and social activities and serve other members. Their development improved the local congregations and the entire church. According to Church President David O. McKay, "The health of a ward will be commensurate with the activity of the youth of that ward."⁴⁹ McKay was referring to all aspects of youth activities—church meetings and recreational programs.

The youth who participated in church athletics developed stronger ties to their religion. For example, basketball player Randy Wardwell from Cincinnati, Ohio, felt that playing the game and watching other teams practice gospel principles "was a spiritual experience. It was a testimony building experience."⁵⁰ Richard Perkins from Blanding, Utah played for the Grayson Ward that won the all-church tournament in 1954. Perkins was the most valuable player that year. He explained, "I've become more religious and active in the Church more through basketball."⁵¹ LaRay Alexander, the coach of the Grayson Ward from Blanding bragged about his players' basketball skill and teamwork. But he was equally as proud of their records in the Church since their basketball participation, pointing out that one had been a stake president and four had served as bishops. After listing their callings, he bragged, "You can tell what kind of caliber guys we had."⁵²

Fellowship

Another spiritual goal of the church's athletic program was for members to interact and fellowship with other Mormons. LDS author Lorry E. Rytting wrote, "Through the fellowship and spirit of teamwork which comes from the activity, participation and interest in the Church's other programs often result in spiritual awakening."⁵³ In 1967, YWMIA President Florence Jacobsen said,

"MIA gives young people an opportunity to mingle socially in a recreational activity and cultural program under a spiritual atmosphere." Young people cemented their friendship when they worked together and played together. Robert Backman, Young Men's General President in the 1980s, described it as "a spirit of brotherhood."⁵⁴

David Olson found fellowship in his Orem, Utah First Ward. The deacons, teachers, and priests—boys ages twelve to eighteen—all played together and created a community. While the taller priests usually made up the first team in basketball, some of the deacons were very talented in softball. Even when a player disqualified the team from the all-church tournament, the team pulled together, supported the person, and created a closer bond.⁵⁵

Almost any group of men who participated in the church's athletic programs during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s shares this sense of community through sports. A group of archivists at the LDS Historical Department confirmed this statement in November 2007. Ron Barney, a life-time member from Utah and Michael Landon, a convert from California, described how church athletics and other recreational activities provided their social life. Barney told how young men in his ward bypassed playing school sports. Church ball was emphasized as much as high school sports. Landon explained that he did not join the LDS Church because of sports, but playing them was a way that he was accepted as part of the community.

In many cases, the fellowship extended beyond the team and to the members of the ward. Blanding residents were proud of their team. Team member Neldon Cochran explained that ward members had few options for entertainment in Blanding. "They didn't have anything else to do but go see the ball game." Local games were highlights but not everyone could leave the Four Corners area to attend all the tournament games. So fans at home could share the victories and losses, Coach LaRay Alexander called the local operator after each game and gave her the score. When the Grayson Ward played for the championship though, seven hundred Blanding residents did

travel to the final game in Provo, Utah.⁵⁶

In Cincinnati, ward members did not always attend games, but they did show up for the “meaningful games” against arch rivals or for the games that determined the championships. The Relief Society and YWMIA provided concessions at the regional games. When the team went on to the zone tournaments, a ten-hour drive to St. Louis, the teenage girls made cheerleading outfits and came along. For the finals in the all-church tournament, some ward members chartered a plane to take interested members to Salt Lake City.⁵⁷

The 1944 all-church basketball champions from Grantsville, Utah, developed a sense of community and friendships that continued for a lifetime. Fifty years after their win, all but one player met for a reunion; the one missing man had died. Team players posed for a picture in exactly the same positions as in their championship photo.⁵⁸ The 1947 Glenwood, Alberta, team developed the same closeness even without winning a game at the all-church tournament. The team lost its first game to Grantsville Second Ward and then lost its second game in the consolation bracket. Yet years later Glenwood team members met and put together a book about their memories of the team. They also recreated their all-church tournament photo.⁵⁹

Reactivation

Despite church leaders’ very best efforts to keep young people active in the church, some strayed. Church sports and recreation were, according to a church magazine article, “an excellent rehabilitating force . . . which will bless and benefit the lives of all.”⁶⁰ Church-sponsored athletics and recreation provided opportunities to create or renew friendships among players—something that helped inactive members feel welcome.

Many activities—especially the sports competitions—required the youth who participated to attend church meetings and follow LDS guidelines such as the Word of Wisdom. Some young men and women who always attended church meetings reported that they kept going because they wanted

to play. While their initial motivation was simply to remain on the team, they learned lessons and developed testimonies of gospel principles.

Cliff Williams could not play church ball when he was in high school because he was on the school's team. He was eligible to play church basketball when he was no longer on an organized team. With all of his basketball though he said the brief time he played church ball was "the highlight of my athletics." Playing with the ward team after he attended Ricks College "kept me active in the church."⁶¹ Similarly, Richard Perkins recalled when the Blanding town team became a church team, some players were not eligible. But they started going to church so they could play.⁶²

Church basketball continued to have this positive impact on participants. The Cincinnati, Ohio, teams played during the 1960s and the bishop encouraged basketball. His son Gary Fish explained that sports kept members active since everyone had to attend meetings. As a result, half of the young men ended up going on missions. Randy Wardwell's family did not regularly attend church. But playing basketball introduced him to church doctrines and motivated him to attend church.⁶³

Conversion

Missionary work is an essential part of the Mormon Church. Just as sports and recreation provided a nonpressure place for members to include those who do not attend church regularly, these activities could also be used to introduce others to the Church. The 1953-54 MIA Athletic Handbook stated, "The athletic program is sponsored with the understanding that it will be used as a missionary tool to make converts."⁶⁴ In 1956 a stake president told of two missionaries who "formed the nucleus" of a basketball team with seven non-members. All seven joined and five served missions. Apostle George Q. Morris suggested that missionary work for the youth of the Church and others was the purpose of MIA. "Every chapel must be a mission field. Every class must be a mission field, and every child who comes to MIA must be considered an investigator of the gospel."⁶⁵

Some young men converted to the church and remained active because of their involvement in church sports. One example was R. Conrad Schultz, who later became a General Authority assigned to the Africa area in 2004. Schultz was born in 1938 and lived in Eugene, Oregon, during his teenage years. He played high school basketball, but quit when a coach criticized him. Some Mormon friends invited Schultz, who was not a Latter-day Saint, to play church ball. The first year the team went to the all-church tournament and lost after two games. But Schultz went to a banquet where Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, an LDS apostle and later president of the Church, spoke. Schultz was impressed. He also enjoyed attending church meetings and felt accepted by the young men and other members of the ward. As a newcomer to the town, Schultz met people and made friends through his contacts at church.

However, Schultz stopped attending church meetings after the basketball season because the rules no longer required him to attend. The next year he decided to play church ball again and started going to church meetings as well. That year the coach invited him to listen to the missionaries and consider joining the LDS Church. Schultz had lots of questions, but through prayer and fasting he decided to be baptized. After he became a member, the team could recruit another nonmember. That year after his baptism the team played at the tournament at Utah State University and won fourth place. Schultz's play impressed the coaches there and he was offered a scholarship at Utah State. Because he did not want to leave his girlfriend who lived in Oregon, he turned it down. Instead, he played basketball his freshman year at the University of Oregon. Schultz also played on a ward softball team that went to all-church, placing second the first year and first the next.

Looking back on the experience, Schultz saw God's hand in his decision to quit the school team because he found the Church. But he also saw problems, explaining that church ball "has to be friendly and it has to be Christian." Schultz generally saw basketball as a good way to do missionary work and reactivate members, especially youth. He remembered that about half of the

non-LDS players during the time he played joined the Church and about half of those remained active beyond their teenage years. For Schultz, playing church ball was a life-changing event.⁶⁶

A similar situation to Schultz's took place in the 1969 Cincinnati First Ward junior championship team. Randy Harkins was the only nonmember on the team. After the all-church tournament, he was baptized. According to his fellow team member Randy Wardwell, that was a clear sign that church ball "was a really great, worthwhile experience." Wardwell felt that the daily prayers at the tournament and the good sportsmanship led to Harkins's conversion. "I know he had a real testimony that he developed" from playing on the team.⁶⁷

Social

Character-Building Experience

While MIA's major purpose was spiritual, sports and recreation also met social needs. According to a 1967 YMMIA letter, play became a "special laboratory where the young people actually put into practice the many principles" learned in church meetings. The 1967 report continued, "We see how well our young people apply that which we have tried to teach them. In the heat and excitement of the games there is no place for sham or pretense. It is here that we find out whether the individual really believes in sportsmanship, in fair play. It is here that we find out if honesty is more important than winning at all costs and if the players do unto others as they would be done by." Sports was a "firing line" where participants learned to "hold their tongue."⁶⁸ To support that idea, young men who played basketball and volleyball took a pledge, "In order that I might render my finest service to humanity, I pledge before God and my fellows to keep myself morally clean, to defend fearlessly the truth, to learn modesty and manliness, and to obey the rules of sportsmanship."⁶⁹

For example, David Olson who played and coached sports in Orem, Utah, explained, "All the years that I either participated or coached and got involved with the young men and the young

men's program I saw it as a good character building experience. The foundation was laid for competitive sports and learning to push yourself and excel. It is going back to the desire and will to win. You are not to be satisfied with second place, always wanting to excel and take first place. You want to be right at the top of the game and give 110 percent."⁷⁰

Sportsmanship

An essential part of this character building in church sports was fair play.⁷¹ Elder S. Dilworth Young, a General Authority, told of a basketball game where "a guarding opponent had thrown me off balance by simply grabbing my wrist and giving a quick jerk downward—not hard and not noticed by the referee." He concluded, "You can't afford to be a 'jerker' in athletics nor can you in life."⁷² Young's comments implied that learning to control emotions in sports could help players learn to control them in other aspects of life.

Paul Hansen, the basketball coach of the Edgehill Ward in Salt Lake City, taught his players the same message. According to team member Brent Eagar, Hansen "started each season saying, 'This is a basketball. Behind me a basketball floor. Across the basketball floor is a chapel. The reason for this game is to put into practice the things you learn in that chapel.'"⁷³

To encourage good play, R. Conrad Schultz's stake did not allow swearing; one violation and the person was ejected from the game. The leaders also offered clinics for referees since poor officiating was a major problem. While some saw basketball as a "tool of the devil," Schultz disagreed. He recalled one elder's quorum president who just stopped playing because he could not control his temper. But for most participants, sports were a good way to have fun and meet new people.⁷⁴

David Olson also learned about sportsmanship through church recreation. He recalled with pride that his Orem First Ward junior team made it to the all-church volleyball tournament. After they got there, it was discovered that one of the players was not eligible to participate because he

got his girlfriend pregnant when the team was playing at region. “Because of that, our team was disqualified from the tournament.” The coach had the team stay at the tournament. The committee allowed Olson’s team to attend the functions and meet the other teams. “We stayed throughout the whole tournament and watched a lot of the teams play that we looked up to that came from California and from Hawaii. We learned an awful lot.” Olson’s team stayed together throughout the tournament and “it just brought the whole team closer. I guess people could see that because at the end of the tournament when they started handing out the awards they called our team up to be presented the sportsmanship trophy.”

Olson continued, “That really hit home to me. I am fifty-five now. That’s been thirty-eight years ago. I still can feel the tingling sensation and the tears coming to the surface. It was a very humbling experience, especially in light of the fact that all through the whole season we had downplayed sportsmanship.” Olson felt that all the teams were good sports. The California teams “must have really promoted [sportsmanship]. I didn’t hear any cuss words. I didn’t see any temper tantrums.” That was different from the teams they had played during the season where Olson saw “coaches cussing out team members and coaches getting on each other.” The California teams “seemed like they were striving for the sportsmanship trophy.” After watching all this, Olson concluded, “Right at the end we were stunned by the mere fact that sportsmanship is the ultimate and the most important.”⁷⁵

Talents

One purpose of MIA was to help young men develop all their talents. Church leaders recognized that everyone has skills and abilities, but in the competitive school environment, not everyone could be the basketball star or the lead in the play. For church programs, general church leaders asked local leaders to make sure everyone had a role. Those who seemed to have two left feet were still given a chance to dance. Those who seemed shy and retiring were allowed to perform

in plays. And those with marginal athletic prowess were still on the team. Church President David O. McKay asked that church recreation provide a place for those who “looked hungrily on” to “develop talents.”⁷⁶

Randy Wardwell from Cincinnati made the school team so he could not compete in church basketball anymore. However, he was impressed that on the church level anyone could play even those who were not natural athletes. As he explained, anyone who could bounce a ball was on the team.⁷⁷ Kenneth Erickson fit the category that Wardwell described. Erickson went on to play sports but he did not “have an opportunity for high school ball” because he was only four feet four inches tall when he graduated.⁷⁸

Outside Praise

Edward A. Ross, a sociologist who attended the Utah State University summer session in 1926, praised the Mormons' efforts, "I don't know any other place where the young people are so well provided for as here in Utah."⁷⁹ In the 1940s Mormon youth leader Ralph W. Hardy quoted an often repeated statement in the *New York Times*, “The LDS church has the largest athletic circuit in the world.” He stressed, “The focal point is the quality of spiritual manhood which the program . . . can instill in the lives of youth.” As a result, the “competition is so managed that it does not crowd out the benefits of mass participation.” This included not only sports but also cultural activities.⁸⁰

Ohio lawyer G. W. Reed expressed similar ideas when he visited Salt Lake City in 1944. LDS YMMIA leader Joseph J. Cannon repeated Reed’s praise in the LDS magazine. Cannon then explained all the church’s programs and then summarized: The Mormon people created an unusually intimate association between leisure-time activities and church functions” with recreational halls in places of worship. After Cannon listed the number of plays and festivals, he concluded that following this example would “make the world better and a more beautiful place in which to live.”⁸¹

Thomas O’Dea, a Catholic, also praised LDS recreation in his 1957 book *The Mormons*.

O’Dea explained, “Recreation—viewed as closely related to work and health—meets with strong Mormon approval.” Since the Mormons ended plural marriage in 1890, it was “an area in which the church has concentrated much of its organizational talent and a large share of its co-operative energy. It is today one of the most important spheres of activity in which group action under church auspices engages the individual member in the active life of the church.” After giving a brief history of the role of recreation in the LDS Church, O’Dea explained that recreation helped with “group solidarity, health, leadership, culture, and self-expression.” He concluded, “The Mormons have spiritualized recreation” and “church-sponsored recreation is considered a kind of religious activity.” It was “one of the areas in which genuine creativity has been shown by the Mormon people.”⁸²

Summary

From the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Mormons have promoted recreation as an essential part of the church. The YMMIA and the YWMIA became the place where young people developed their spiritual lives and their characters. Through church programs, young Mormons learned how to play and to use those skills to improve their activity in the Church and build their characters. This introduction provides background to understand the Church’s extensive programs from 1900 through 1971. The chapters that follow describe basketball, softball, volleyball, individual sports, and dance activities.

1. Rex Austin Skidmore, "Mormon Recreation in Theory and Practice: A Study of Social Change" (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1941), 763.
2. Ruth Andrus, "A History of the Recreation Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 1962), 492.
3. Ibid.; "Brigham Young Said: On Recreation," *Improvement Era* (June 1950):529; Richard Ian Kimball, *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1900-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003). 30.
4. Kimball, 4-5.
5. Ibid., 7. Kimball details how Joseph F. Smith did not only talk about the role of sports. He built the Deseret Gym in Salt Lake City to meet the needs of LDS youth. See Kimball, 13, 57-87 for information on the gym's construction and general use. Deseret Gym was the home for many of the tournaments discussed in this book.
6. *Church News*, June 18, 1932, 3.
7. Scott Kenney, "The Mutual Improvement Associations: A Preliminary History, 1900-1950," Task Papers in LDS History, Number 6 (Salt Lake City: History Division, LDS Church Historical Department, 1976), 3; Kimball, 4. According to Richard Ian Kimball, Clifford Putney's *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America* "situates LDS recreational activities on the extra edge of Protestant recreation." Kimball then quotes Putney, "The Mormon Church was the first to support Boy Scout troops, the first to erect a recreation hall wherein athletic competition was held." Why? Putney guesses "why exactly they pioneered these forms of organized uplift is difficult to explain. Possibly it devolved somehow from their belief in familial, as opposed to individual, salvation: the notion that more important than inner goodness was outward conformity to the laws of God and society"(quote from Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 53, quoted in Kimball, 17.)
8. Owen Rich, Notes, in possession of author.
9. William Friden, Email, November 29, 2003, in possession of author.
10. There was a short-lived Mormon program for teenagers in Nauvoo.
11. Kenney, 2.
12. Ibid., 5-6.

13. This reorganization not only affected the youth organizations. The Relief Society, the women's organization, also experienced changes. A classic example is a grain storage program. In 1876, Brigham Young asked the women to store grain. Until Joseph F. Smith's change, the women turned to the General Board for answers. With Smith's refocus, the General Board told women to address their questions to their bishop. So in the 1900s when Salt Lake City women wondered if they should continue to store grain, the General Board told them to ask their bishops. For more information on the effects of Smith's correlation, see Jessie L. Embry, "Grain Storage: The Balance of Power Between Priesthood Authority and Relief Society Autonomy," *Dialogue* 15 (Winter 1982), 59-66.

14. Kenney, 9-11; Quoted in Kimball, 98. The role of music in YMMIA and YWMIA is an important topic that will not be discussed in this book.

15. Kimball, 3.

11. Kenney, 9-11; Kimball, 98. The role of music in YMMIA and YWMIA is important topic that will not be discussed in this book.

12. Kimball, 98-99.

13. Kenney, 11-14.

14. Ibid., 14-16; Orval Leonard Nelson, "A Study of Boy Scout and Aaronic Priesthood Activity (Boys Age Twelve to Fourteen) in Selected LDS Wards" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 1964), 1-15.

15. Kenney, 16-17; Helen Buckler, *Wo-He-Lo: The Story of Camp Fire Girls, 1910-1960* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), 23, 26, 106.

16. YMMIA Circular Letters, Church Record 15/1, LDS Church Library, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Hereinafter cited as LDS Church Library.)

17. *Church News*, June 18, 1932. 3.

18. Kenney, 24-25.

19. Kimball, 38, 44-46.

20. The General Board grew as the number of programs grew. There are no clear histories of how those changes took place and records of the YMMIA and YWMIA are closed to researchers.

21. Owen Rich History, copy in possession of author. This is a personal history that Rich is writing for his family. He kindly gave the author copies of some of the pages.
22. Kimball, 38, 44-46.
23. Mabel Jones Gabbott, "The Centennial Festivities—Churchwide and Yearlong," *Improvement Era* (May 1969):68-69.
24. YMMIA Records, Church Record 15/1, LDS Church Library.
25. *Church News*, September 11, 1949, 3C.
26. *Ibid.*, June 25, 1932, 1.
27. http://gospelink.com/library/doc?doc_id+238420&highlight_p+1, retrieved on September 19, 2007.
28. June Conference Programs, Church Record 13/66, Church History Library.
29. "The Girls' Program," YWMIA Records, Church Record 13/66, Church History Library.
30. "Everything Nice," Filmstrip script, Church Record, 11/66, Church History Library.
31. Kimball, 48.
32. Joseph Lee, *Play in Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921), 13; Luther Gulick, *A Philosophy of Play* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920); Edwin A. Kirkpatrick, *Fundamentals of Child Study* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1917). Lee's seven instincts were creation, rhythm, hunting, fighting, nurture, curiosity, and team play. Kirkpatrick also listed instincts: individualistic, racial, social, imitation, play, curiosity, regulative, expressive, and resultant. Under imitation he included reflex, spontaneous, dramatic, voluntary, and idealistic. Under resultant he had collecting, constructive, aesthetics, migratory, and rhythmic.
33. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1975; Mutual Improvement Associations, *Recreation Bulletin, Number 5* (Salt Lake City: General Board of MIA, 1925). 28-29.
34. Skidmore, 54.
35. YMMIA General Board, *Athletic Handbook*, 1964-65 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964-65), 14. (Hereinafter referred to as Athletic Handbook with the publication year.)

36. Ibid., 1952-53, 7.
37. Ibid, 1952-53, 9.
38. Gordon Norman Oborn, "An Historical Study of the All-Church Softball Tournament of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1961), 54.
39. *Athletic Handbook*, 1952-53, 21; 1957-58, 22.
40. Ibid., 1952-53, 21; 58-59, 25; 64-65, 20; 69-70, 19.
41. Ibid., 1952-53, 31, 37; 58-59, 27; 64-65, 20.
42. Ibid., 1952-53, 21; 58-59, 25; 64-65, 17-18; 69-70, 22.
43. Ibid., 1952-53, 21.
44. Ibid, 1956-57, 22; 1958-59, 25.
45. Ibid., 1952-53, 21.
46. *Church News*, August 31, 1968, 5.
47. *Church News*, August 29, 1970, 6-7.
48. LaRue C. Longden, "June Conference 1951," *Improvement Era* (May 1951), 327.
49. Robert L. Backman, "Revitalizing Aaronic Priesthood Quorums," *Ensign* (November 1982): 38.
50. Randy Wardwell Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Lehi, Utah, 12, LDS Sports and Recreation Oral History Project, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. (Unless otherwise cited, all oral histories come from this collection.).
51. Richard Perkins Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Blanding, Utah, 7.
52. LaRay Alexander Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, Blanding, Utah, 4.
53. Lorry E. Rytting, "Play Ball: Priesthood Softball," *Improvement Era* (August 1961), 588-92.
54. "Mutual Message," *Improvement Era* (May 1942):318; Backman, 38.

55. David Olson Oral History, interviewed by Fred Washburn, 2004, Orem, Utah, 1-4.
56. Neldon Cochran Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Blanding, Utah, 5; Alexander, 5
57. Wardwell, 6.
58. Cliff Williams, Grantsville file, LDS Sports and Recreation file, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, donated to L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
59. Glenwood file, LDS Sports and Recreation file.
60. "Softball," *Improvement Era* (April 1954):218.
61. Williams.
62. Perkins, 7.
63. Gary Fish Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Alpine, Utah, 4; Wardwell, 1-2
64. MIA Athletic Handbook, 1953-54, 13.
65. Allie Howe, "Carry On, MIA," *Improvement Era* (August 1956):571-75; Doyle L. Green, "A Decade of Service—1948-1958," *Improvement Era* (July 1958):525.
66. R. Conrad Schultz Oral History, interviewed by Benjamin Sandel, 2004, 1-13.
67. Wardwell, 11.
68. YMMIA Circular Letter, December 18, 1967, Church Record 15/1, Church History Library.
69. "M-Men," *Improvement Era* (January 1938):48.
70. Olson, 5.
71. YMMIA Circular Letter, December 18, 1967.
72. S. Dilworth Young, "If I Were in My Teens," *Improvement Era* (March 1955):200-201.
73. Brent Eagar Oral History, interviewed by Benjamin Sandel, 2003, Orem, Utah, 1-5.
74. Schultz, 5.

75. David Olson, interviewed by Fred Washburn, 2004, Orem, Utah, 1-4.
76. Church Record 15/1 box 2 folder 2, LDS Church Archives.
77. Schultz, 4.
78. Kenneth Erickson Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 11.
79. Kimball, 38, 44-46.
80. Ralph W. Hardy, YMMIA Files, Church Record 15/1, Church History Library.
81. Joseph J. Cannon, "An Overview of Mormon Recreation," *The Improvement Era* (April 1944):220-21. Cannon elaborated on the number of young Latter-day Saints involved in the recreational programs of the Church.
 - Number of choirs in wards—973
 - People involved in plays—23,209
 - Dance instruction hours—9,312
 - Music festivals—80
 - Dance festivals—55
 - Drama festivals—57
82. Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 146-147.