Spiritualized Recreation

Mormon All-Church Athletic Tournaments and Dance Festivals

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"The Mormon Church, though regional in extant and not to be counted among community resources over the greater part of the country, deserves to be mentioned for the very complete program it conducts for its youth. This is administered through a Young Men's and a Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, serving 140,000 young people of all ages. There are 30,000 between the ages of 17 and 24 and an additional 8,400 from 25 to 35. The Mutual Improvement Associations are concerned with all aspects of the lives of their members. Much recreation and wholesome amusement is provided. There are indoor and outdoor sports of all kinds. Dramatics and public speaking are integral parts of local programs and there is a well-trained choral group of youth in each church.

The attracting power of the church organization of this denomination is impressively demonstrated by the fact that 55 percent of their total membership is present at the weekly meetings. Mormon churches are real community centers, often well equipped for the purpose. The maintenance of so elaborate and beneficial a program for young people is in part made possible by the fact that Mormons practice tithing, a financing method that has been relinquished by most other denominations. However, the energy and forethought with which Mormons have provided for the recreational life and other experiences affecting the well being of their youth is a conspicuous example of what a church can do for its young people if determination is present."

C. Gilbert Wrenn and D. L. Harley, *Time on their Hands: A Report of Leisure, Recreation and Young People* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1941), 140

Acknowledgments

For several years I studied amateur baseball in Utah. While most sports historians have focused on the professional game, I discovered that town and semi-professional baseball played an important role in the state and in the nation's history. I thought I was finished studying sports until Stanford Layton, former editor of the *Utah Historical Quarterly* commented in *Red Stockings and Out-of-Towners: Utah Sports*, that no one had researched Utah basketball history.[1] I took that as a challenge, but I came up with a different project from what I envisioned. As I did preliminary research, I stumbled across information on LDS Church basketball, most notably the all-church tournaments. I sent out a press release to gather stories; that was followed up by an article and a picture of me in the *Deseret News* and the *Church News*.[2]

The response to my request for information was overwhelming. I received a few letters, occasional telephone calls, and hundreds of e-mails. People wanted to tell me about their experiences in church sports on all levels and in all sports. Since then I have added other Young Men and Young Women Mutual Improvement Association recreation. My work expands the time period and the areas of study that Richard Kimball started with his dissertation (since published by the University of Illinois Press).[3]

Spiritualized Recreation is based on oral history interviews conducted for the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies. Brian Q. Cannon, the center's director during the time of this study, supported the idea of an oral history project on this topic. Kris Nelson, the center's secretary, helped complete the final transcripts. They also read an early book manuscript and offered valuable suggestions. Richard Kimball and Larry Gerlach read an early version as peer reviewers. While I did not follow all their suggestions, their comments forced me to look more carefully at what I wanted to do with this study. Brian Cannon then reread the manuscript to sign off on the corrections.

The study also benefitted by careful reading by my thoughtful and wise sister Janet Embry and an excellent editor, former student, and friend Heather Seferovich. Another friend Claudia Shelton added her proofreading skills. Casey Glifford and Jason Edward Thompson also read through the manuscript and found embarrassing errors. Jason Thompson was very helpful in doing all the technology things to put the book on the internet.

Brigham Young University students conducted nearly all the oral history interviews in the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies LDS Sports and Receation Oral History Project. I am grateful for their efforts. They discovered that scheduling interviews into their busy student schedules was not always easy, so some completed more interviews than others. These students included (listed in the order that they were hired): Justin Flake, Jenny Harris, Michael Cannon, Gary Huntington, Susan Wheelwright, Matthew Swenson, Ben Sandel, Erin Hutchings, Valerie Davis, Lisa Christensen, James Dalrymple, and Casey Schenk.

In addition to these Redd Center employees, students in my two sports history classes added interviews and information. The first class was on sports history in general. The class members were awesome. The students shared their feelings about the role of athletics in their lives and completed interviews about LDS sports. The class included a BYU football and soccer player. All the class members had participated in various sports on different levels and added to the discussions. I learned more from the class than I taught. Class members included Micah Alba, Bryan Bush, Krissa Campbell, Darin Childers, Esther Harris, Lawrance Nai, Heidi Rose, Aaron Smith, Brian Springer, Jeff Swift, and Fred Washburn. I thank the BYU History Department and Honors Program for sponsoring the class.

The second class was on LDS sports and recreation. The students read Richard Kimball's

book and very early drafts of *Spiritualized Recreation.* They also conducted individual research on LDS sports and recreation that provided valuable research material. The students included Sunny Ashton, Tyler Dunn, Brant Ellsworth, Kacy Cutts Hastings, Ryan Hastings, Timothy Johnson, Daniel Nielson, Jared Smith, and Adam Stewart. I especially thank Sunny for her research on LDS women's sports, Brant for his paper on the San Antonio Temple dedication program, and Kacy and Ryan for their work on regional softball..

The students in an American Studies 200 class during Winter Semester 2007 also shared their experiences with Mormon sports. These included Rachel Atkin, John Brumbaugh, Cynthia Clark, Sarah Goaslind, Sara Manning, Jake Davis, Joseph Hinckley, and Liesl Christensen. Clark asked her sons, sons–Andrew, Steve, and Jesse, to email about their experiences.

This book would not have been possible though without the more than one hundred men and women who agreed to be interviewed. Their willingness to share their memories made this study possible and will be valuable for other scholars who read the transcripts in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

1. Stanford Layton, ed. *Red Stockings and Out-of-Towners: Utah Sports* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2003),

2. *Deseret News*, May 28, 2003; *Church News*, June 21, 2003; http://www.deseretnews.com, retrieved January 15, 2008.

3. Richard Ian Kimball, *To Make True Latter-day Saints: Mormon Recreation in the Progressive Era* (Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for LDS Church History, 2000); Richard Ian Kimball, *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

Book Overview

Spiritualized Recreation: Mormon All-Church Athletic Tournaments and Dance Festivals surveys sports and recreational activities in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon). It includes an introduction of the role of recreation in religious activities, an overview of activities in the LDS Church, and chapters on specific programs including basketball, softball, volleyball, tennis, golf, relay races, and dance with a special focus on the 1950s and 1960s. While the all-church athletic tournaments and dance festivals ended in 1971-1972, programs continued on a smaller scale. The final chapter explores the reasons for the change and for an increased interest since 2004.

There is no charge for accessing or downloading copies of this manuscript. Bound paper copies can be ordered from the Redd Center, 366 SWKT, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602, jessie_embry@byu.edu, 801-422-4048 at cost.

A major research tool was the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies LDS Sports and Recreation Oral History Project. The Redd Center is a research center at Brigham Young University. Transcripts of the oral history are available through the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Chapter 1

Religion, Sports, and Recreation

The first chapter looks at the role that sports and recreation have played in religion over the centuries. It explains that many cultures saw these activities as a part of worship. While most Christian churches do not directly connect sports and religion, they use games to provide fellowship, missionary work, and reactivation. Play can even be part of the Protestant work ethic. The Roman Catholic Church and the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) provide examples of ways churches use sports and recreation.

Chapter 2

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

The second chapter looks at the history of sports and recreation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It surveys how church presidents from the beginning felt about the importance of recreation. It highlights the development of the program in the Mutual Improvement Association (MIA), an organization for teenagers. Finally, it explains the spiritual (testimony building, fellowshipping, overcoming the world, reactivating members, and converting nonmembers) and social goals (building character, practicing sportsmanship, and developing talents) for church activities.

Chapter 3

Basketball

The largest all-church athletic program in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was basketball. This chapter surveys the beginnings of basketball and its connections to religion. The Mormon Church adopted the game early and created a playing space in their meeting houses. The chapter then provides a history of the all-church tournament. It concludes with individual stories about basketball in the LDS Church.

Chapter 4

Softball

The second largest all-church athletic program in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was softball. Although the tournament was very similar to basketball, it was unique because church leaders declared that the priesthood and not the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association was in charge. This chapter surveys the history of softball and then describes the all-church tournament. It concludes with individual stories about softball in the LDS Church.

Chapter 5

Other Sports and Recreation

While basketball and softball were the largest tournaments, there were other activities. Following the format of chapters 3 and 4, this chapter gives a history of the activity and then describes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' involvement. The programs discussed are volleyball, tennis, golf, relay races, and dance. Individual stories conclude each discussion.

Chapter 6

LDS Church Youth Activities Since the 1970s

The final chapter explains the reasons for the elimination of the all-church athletic tournaments and dance festivals in 1971-1972. These include immediate concerns–church growth, abuses of the system, and officiating concerns. In addition, church leaders put increased focus on the priesthood and spiritual activities. However, sports and recreation did not disappear. This chapter explains regional activities and one-time programs. Church leaders recommended an increase of cultural and sports activities in 2004. The chapter discusses some new programs and expanded old programs.

Preface

I grew up during the 1950s and 1960s in a home where my parents focused on religious activity in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My father, Bertis L. Embry, explained in an oral history interview, "There has never been any question to us whether we went to church or not; we all went. The Church has meant everything in our lives. The Church is more than just a church; it is a way of life."[1] Included in that "way of life" was the Protestant work ethic. My father taught at Utah State University, but he also farmed. When I was young, my mother, Anna Elizabeth Coulson Embry, worked at home. Later she updated her registered nurse training and worked in a nursing home and ended her career as a public health nurse. All the while she continued to do the things she had done when she was home full time, including raising a large garden and preserving the produce for the winter. One of my mother's favorite sayings was, "A change is as good as a break."

While my parents believed in work, they also encouraged play. My father tried to have a day, or at least half a day, for recreation a week. He also believed that learning came from traveling and meeting new people. We went on summer vacations to places like Yellowstone. My father attended institutes in the Midwest and New York State and accepted foreign contracts in the Middle East and Central America, and when we were young, the family traveled with him. We lived in Iran for two years and traveled around the world as we went to Iran and back home to Utah.

Of course, each family is unique. But my family exemplified some common Mormon elements. We went to all church activities, we worked, and we played. Church activities were not limited to Sunday worship services. I participated in roadshows (short dramatic presentations) that were performed in all the church buildings in our stake. I played church basketball, even though I am not at all athletic. In Primary, the children's organization, I learned how to knit, crochet, and embroider. I talked in worship services. These sport and recreational activities were as much a part of my religion as attending worship services such as sacrament meeting or Sunday School.

My involvement in sport and recreation was minor compared to those with natural abilities. During my growing up years, the LDS Church sponsored extensive programs in sports, drama, music, dance, and speech. These included all-church tournaments in basketball, softball, volleyball, tennis, golf, and even horseshoes. Teams played on a stake level; winners advanced to regional competitions and then to a large tournament in Salt Lake City. In addition to sports, teenage Mormons participated in plays, concerts, speech programs, and dance festivals on a local level and at June Conference, a churchwide training program for Young Men and Young Women Mutual Improvement Association leaders.

How do these play activities fit into the Mormon view of the Protestant work ethic? Are Mormons working when they play? In some respects, the answer is yes. In *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation,* Professor Steven J. Overman wrote, "Modern sport (and I would add recreation) disseminates, reaffirms, and reinforces values which have their origins in religion."[2]

My research supports Overman's conclusion by looking at the role of sport and recreation in the LDS Church during much of the twentieth century. While some Mormon historians correctly argue that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young encouraged athletic skills and cultural awareness, the LDS Church, along with other religions during the American Progressive Era at the turn of the twentieth century, embraced games as spiritual curriculum. The LDS Church's activities mirrored general American religious recreation for nearly seventy years.

In 1971, the focus on sports and recreation shifted in the LDS Church when leaders eliminated the all-church athletic contests. A few years later the leaders also eliminated June Conference along with all other auxiliary conferences. Regional athletics continued for awhile but eventually general and local leaders phased these out as well. The most obvious reason for this shift was that the LDS Church grew internationally and focused on more than just American recreational activities. There may be other reasons as well. Church basketball, for example, lost the reputation of putting gospel teachings into action. A t-shirt with a picture of an Angel Moroni (looking very

much like a National Basketball Association logo of Jerry West) declares, “Church Ball: The brawl that begins with a prayer.”

The tide may be turning again. In 2004 the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints encouraged “local leaders to hold stake and multistake events and activities to provide a sense of unity and opportunities to develop friendships.” Suggested programs were sports, dance, drama, music, speech, and art. [3] These sound like the activities I experienced in the 1960s. Maybe they will not be on the same scale and perhaps they will focus on different activities. Members in Brazil may play soccer instead of softball. But these are programs that church leaders did not stress as much in the 1980s and 1990s.

If LDS General Authorities are suggesting a return to past activities, maybe it is time for a history of sports and recreation in Mormon culture. When I advertised that I was researching church basketball, I received an e-mail from a man looking for programs for the single adults in his stake. He wanted to know what worked in the past and how he could adapt that to the present program. This study may do that, but it may do even more. I hope it will provide a frame work for the LDS Church sport and recreation program, explaining the history, the successes, and the failures. And it will discuss possible reasons why the Church leaders shifted the focus away from and then back to religious recreation.

In some ways, this is a history of the recreational aspects of the Mutual Improvement Associations (MIA) for Mormon teenagers. It will include some of the history of these organizations, but it will not cover everything because the topic is too large and some sources are not available. When researcher Scott Kenney wrote “The Mutual Improvement Associations: A Preliminary History, 1900-1950,” the minutes for the MIA General Board as well as for the various MIA committees were open to researchers but they are now closed. [4] Available sources include church publications, and some yearly handbooks, programs, and guides. The church-owned *Deseret News* and *Church News* along with other regional and local newspapers also reported the all-church activities.

Other sources are participants' memories. For example, some people wrote autobiographies that include useful information. Also, the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies collected 106 oral histories on the topic of Mormon sports and recreation. However, memories have unique problems. Some people remember only the good; some remember only the unusual or negative. Over time memories blend together, so while some can give a play-by-play account of a church basketball game, others remember only generalizations. Even if everyone remembered the details, it would be impossible to include all of those accounts. For some, like myself, memories are limited. I can remember one roadshow and one basketball game quite clearly. But I know I took part in others.

The selection of interviewees for the oral histories also created unique concerns. Most responded to a newspaper article asking for information for this project. Many who responded had won all-church tournaments. Initially, I had planned to research the history of basketball in Utah. As I read past newspapers looking for information on the Utah Stars, the Utah Jazz, and high school and college teams, the *Deseret News* and *Salt Lake Tribune* articles frequently referred to Mormon basketball, so that became my topic. Newspapers published my press release asking for information on church basketball, but I received responses for softball and volleyball as well as basketball. So I expanded my topic.

Because the LDS Church sponsored all-church tournaments for the men, the only women who responded were a few who served as "sponsors" or cheerleaders for visiting teams. I wanted to include the women's activities, so I sent out another press release asking for information on all types of Mormon sport and recreation. I received only a few responses. It is possible that most participants, like me, had limited memories. For most activities, the payoff was not an all-church tournament with its memorable hoopla. The exception was the June Conference Dance Festival. I have included it because it shows the involvement of both men and women.

The result is that while the book discusses various aspects of LDS sport and recreation, it does not cover all of them equally. There is more information on men's games than dance. The stories from the oral histories focus on the all-church tournament, so that is the discussion in this

book. MIA also included speech, music, and drama on the local, stake, regional, and June Conference levels, but because I have very few stories these activities are not included in this study of all-church tournaments.[5]

Spiritualized Recreation is not an attempt to duplicate Richard Ian Kimball's excellent study *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1900-1940,* which explores the Progressive movement's effect on Mormon recreation, the building of the Deseret Gym, sports as a way to teach a health code (the Word of Wisdom), and the development of camping in the Church.[6] But his book stopped in 1940 and mentioned only in passing the all-church tournaments that started in the 1920s and reached their zenith in the 1950s and 1960s.

Spiritualized Recreation starts with a chapter on the relationship between sports, recreation, and religion. But churches are not the only organizations that sponsor these activities. When I presented a paper on the Mormon programs at an academic conference, the other panelist talked about the role of sports in communist East Germany. The reasons for participation in sports were strikingly similar. But because the LDS Church has a religious dimension, the chapter focuses only on religion.

The second chapter summarizes the role of sports and recreation in the LDS Church and in the MIA organization. It includes some of the reasons why the LDS Church sponsored the tournaments and festivals. The third chapter discusses basketball, the largest all-church program. The fourth chapter is on softball, the second largest tournament. The fifth chapter looks at volleyball, tennis, golf, relays, other sports, and dance. The sixth and final chapter discusses the reasons why the all-church programs ended, the programs that followed, and possible arguments for an increased interest in sports and recreation.

This book could take a variety of approaches. I chose to write it as a celebration of the all-church tournaments. It uses the oral histories to discuss the experiences of boys and men at the tournaments. I reference church magazines and manuals to support their stories. As a result, the study is mainly written for a Mormon audience. However, the interviewees talk about the strengths

and weaknesses of the programs, so this book will too. The oral histories are available at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University so future researchers can study other aspects. My goal with this study is to highlight the interviews. I also hope Mormon readers will reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of the athletic programs.

1. Bertis L. Embry Oral History, interviewed by Jessie Embry, 1984, 105, copy in author's possession. A copy has been donated to Special Collections at Utah State University Merrill-Crazier Library.

2. Steven J. Overman, *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1997), 8.

3. Adam C. Olson, "Celebrating the Gospel Around the World," *Ensign* (May 2004):128.

4. 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), 41.

5. For those interested in speech, music, and drama, a good starting point would be the annual manuals and supplements distributed by the YMMIA and YWMIA.

6. Richard Ian Kimball, *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1900-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

Chapter 1
Religion, Sports, and Recreation

- Hopi kachina dances
- Japanese sumo wrestling
- Greek Olympic games
- Basketball

What do all these activities have in common? Disparate as they may appear, all have a connection between religion, sports, and recreation. This chapter examines the common elements to provide a setting for the Mormon athletic and cultural experience in the twentieth century. It starts with definitions of religion, sports, and recreation and then continues with a summarization of how cultures throughout history have combined religion with recreation.

Term Definitions

Sports historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have developed definitions and theories about the relationship between religion, play, and sport. Based on this research, I have come up with my own explanations for this study.

Religion

Religion is the belief and worship of a supreme being. While that appears to be a simple statement, there are many elements involved. First, religion usually (but not always) implies a faith in a superior power. Worship is an important part of religion, but members of all churches also meet together as communities to support each other and to engage in activities that are not directly related to worship.

Recreation

For most twentieth- and twenty-first century Americans, recreation is anything they do that is not work. It is a way to relax and recover from the day-to-day activities they do to earn a living. While recreation can be individual, I use the term here to refer to group activities.

Sports

Recreation includes games that could be played on a computer, watched on television or in person, or participated in through a team activity. For this study, sports refers to games that require

physical activity.

Cultures and Sports and Recreation

Through the centuries, cultures throughout the world have combined sports, recreation, and religion. Allen Guttmann, a sports historian, defines sports as organized play with rules and physical activities. He concludes that some primitive societies often used these activities to impress a superior being. Carl Diem, a German athlete who started the Olympic torch relay in the 1930s, even maintains, "All physical exercises were originally cultic."[1]

Americas

American Indian examples illustrate Guttmann's and Diem's conclusions. For centuries in North America, the Choctaws and Cherokees threw a small ball with a webbed stick into a goal. Fredrick W. Hodge's 1907 *Handbook of American Indians* explained the activity, "The ball was a sacred object not to be touched with the hand, and has been identified as symbolizing the earth, the sun, or the moon."[2] The game was "not a religion . . . [but it was] the primary mode of collective expression of Choctaw sacred ideology." Before the game medicine men performed rituals. Then men played the game while women danced and cheered. An all-night social dance for both genders followed.[3]

Mexican and Central American natives also had religious games. Mayan tradition holds that twin brothers challenged the gods of the underworld to an unidentified game and lost. After the brothers were killed, the gods put one brother's head in a tree. A young girl discovered it, became pregnant from the head's seed, and bore sons who later defeated the gods in a second game. The Mayans played this game on ball courts near temples all the way from northern Mexico to Guatemala. The games were close enough to a religion that Spanish missionaries labeled the play as pagan and outlawed it. In their place, the missionaries introduced their non-religious sports: cockfights, bullfights, and horse races.[4]

A North American culture, the Hopis, used dance to communicate with the gods, who lived in the mountains. Several times a year Hopi men dressed as kachinas, the communicators to the gods and performed dances in which they asked the dieties for favors such as rain or a good harvest. Uncles carved dolls of these kachinas to teach their nephews and nieces about the gods and all Hopis' dependency on the divine beings.[5]

Japan

Cultures outside the Americas also combined religion with recreation. For example, for centuries Japanese sumo wrestling, archery, and fencing all had religious elements. Fencing masters formed schools where they taught techniques they learned from the gods. Sumo wrestlers dedicated their performances to their diety and asked for divine help. The wrestlers performed at religious services and fund raisers for shrines and temples.[6] Some festivals included dancing to ask the spirits for a good harvest.[7]

Greece

Likewise the Greeks paired sports with recreation at various celebrations. These included "athletic and equestrian competition," music, and drama. Each festival honored a different god. The best-known celebration, the Olympic games, focused on Zeus. Historian Allen Guttmann explains, "The Olympic games were sacred games, staged in a sacred place, and at a sacred festival; they were a religious act in honor of the deity. These who took part did so in order to serve the god and the prizes they won came from the god."[8]

Commenting on Greek games, Mark Golden, a professor of classics at the University of Toronto, cautions, "There is surely something in the connection of sport and religion in ancient Greece, but . . . a lot depends on our perspective. Greek sport seems very religious in contrast with most of contemporary professional sport. It is really exceptionally so in a society in which every part of life was pervaded by cult activity and invocations of the gods. Over time, sports became more secular."[9] Sports, like religion and warfare, provided a way to divide the society into men and women, slaves and owners, Greek and non-Greek.[10]

Eric Midwinter expresses similar concerns, "There have been well meaning efforts to distinguish rites in some of the earlier athletic ventures, but the evidence is excessively frail. Quite simply, holiday crowds and a people who revered graceful physical exercise added wrestling and racing to funeral, religious and civic ceremonies."[11] Allen Guttmann challenges Midwinter's conclusions. While Guttmann agrees that seeing religion in all sports and recreation was an oversimplification, he blames modern society: "It is a fault of our own pervasive secularism that we tend to underestimate the cultic aspects of primitive sports."[12]

England

Outside Greece, several centuries later, British sports started as festivals and were part of everyday life, pagan traditions, and religious holidays. For example, May Day celebrated the seasons and idolatry with folk games such as foot racing, tossing, bowling, and ball games.[13] Scholars often see sport as a Protestant activity but argue that the Puritans opposed games. James I issued his *Declaration of Sports* or *Book of Sport* in 1618 because Purtians prevented Sunday recreation in Lancashire. He urged "lawfull (*sic*) recreation . . . such as dauncing (*sic*), either men or women, Archeries (*sic*) for men, leaping vaulting or other harmless Recreation (*sic*)." Many Puritans ignored the decree because they "saw their mission to erase all sport and play from men's lives." In 1633 when Charles I enforced James I's decree, the Puritans who controlled Parliament burned it.[14] Commenting on this event, Allen Guttmann claims, "The English and American Puritans retarded the emergence of modern sports."[15]

Some scholars though believe the Puritans did not completely oppose games. Historian Steven Overman argues that the Puritans disapproved of the English upper class and showed their resentment by opposing recreational activities since only the rich were allowed to play games.[16] The Puritans accepted "lawful sport or recreation" that was not related to the upper-class games and which "refresh[ed]" the participants. A Puritan minister declared, "We daily need some respite and diversion, without which we dull our powers; a little intermission sharpens 'em again." Or as another minister suggested, "The scope and end of all recreation is that God may be honored in and by them."[17]

During this same era, Charles II, "the Merry Monarch," returned the "pleasure of the stage and turf" in 1660. He enjoyed tennis, golf, archery, and boxing–the upper class sports the Puritans opposed. For example, court tennis was only for the wealthy. It could not be played by "servants or laborer[s]."[18] Historian Eric Midwinter argues that sports were disliked because like modern-day television, sports and recreation were "diverting" and took people away from work.[19]

When Victoria became queen in 1837, she changed the old class rules for games and allowed all classes to participate in sports. During her reign, the British population grew from fourteen to twenty-one million and moved from the country into the cities. English residents had more free time and played more games. The word sport–meaning participation in an organized game–first appeared in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1863. Sport evolved into a "metaphor for life." Participants

argued that games taught "fortitude, self-rule and public spirit."[20]

Eventually sports became an important part of education. For example, in 1899 the Anglican Church opened a boys' school in Jerusalem for the "better families" in the area. Most of the first fifteen students were Christians, but there also were Jews and Muslims. The school stressed that "a healthy body was necessary for a healthy mind; this was the backbone of the Christian gentleman." School leaders also believed that games taught moral values and were "character-training."[21]

United States

Like the English, American Puritans had mixed feelings about sports and recreation. In New England sports were acceptable if they were not played on Sunday and if they served a purpose. Minister Cotton Mather said, "Laudable recreation can be used for sauce but not for meat." Scholars have argued the extremes about American Puritans' views of recreation. On one hand historians say the Puritans did not allow any recreation; on the other hand, historians insist Puritans supported games, music, theater, and dance. Some scholars suggested the clergy spoke against sports, and the government passed laws limiting activities only after people were caught doing what was preached against.[22]

The Puritans were not the only Americans, however, who questioned participation in sports and recreation. In the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even twentieth centuries some churches and educational institutions discouraged sports. In 1792 the Methodist Episcopal Church declared, "We prohibit play in the strongest terms." In 1924 the president of Yale College insisted, "To indulge a taste for playgoing means nothing more or less than the loss of that valuable treasure, the immortal soul."[23]

Value of Sports

While many British and American Protestants believed that recreation was a waste of time, others saw connections between the Protestant work ethic and play. Work, which was considered a sacred "sacrament" was an important part of English and American Protestant culture. In their view, God rewarded those who worked hard and did not waste time. As Benjamin Franklin declared, "Leisure is time for doing something useful." Some Protestants even included reading, singing, speaking, acting, and dancing as moral virtues at camp meetings and revivals. These Protestants stressed doing something rather than idling away time.[24]

These ideas expanded during the nineteenth century. Play served a useful purpose for industrial workers by giving them social opportunities in impersonal cities. Some businesses recognized that sports united workers, served as a way to release aggressive feelings, and fostered a team spirit as workers supported a common cause. On some levels, then, sport became part of work. When recreation helped advance a goal, it became as important as work.[25]

Americans further defined the Protestant work ethic. According to the American dream, success became proof of God's blessings. Americans saw purpose in winning–beating someone else became the goal.[26] Ironically, Americans were rugged individualists who wanted to be the winners, but they were also joiners. Success happened not on an individual level but also on a collective level.[27]

In *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation,* author Steven J. Overman identifies "seven cardinal virtues of the Protestant ethic" and then adapts them to sports.[28] He spends an entire book showing the correlation between these virtues. Two examples illustrate how he relates the Protestant ethic and sports. For example, Protestants generally believe in setting goals and then achieving them. Of course, the end goal is personal salvation, but that goal can best be achieved by setting smaller goals. These goals that are along the way to the final destiny help achieve the final end. Sports provide an illustration of this pattern. In sports the ultimate goal is winning the game. Players are able to win by setting smaller goals such as learning the rules and skills required to perform well and by making individual plays during the game that result in scores and eventually victory. Along the same lines, Protestants believe that they receive status in the community if they successfully fulfill their economic goals at work. Those who participate in sports also have status in the community if they make money by performing well or if the community recognizes them as part of an elite winning team.[29]

Overman explains how these elements of the Protestant ethic were important in the nineteenth century and continued to be so in the twentieth. Studies in the 1930s and 1960s expand the relationship between virtues and sports. According to Harry Edwards' 1973 *Sociology of Sport,* Americans developed a "sports creed" which showed that sports taught desirable character qualities. For example, just as "practice makes perfect" in all aspects of life, athletes practiced to perfect skills needed to play a game and then used those skills in the actual games where the goal was to win. As

they practiced and played, men and women, boys and girls learned moral values such as the importance of working together, maintaining a strong body, and teaching fair play. Other "worthwhile character qualities" that sports helped develop were "reliance, perseverance, determination, and a willingness to abide by rules." Social workers believe as a result of these character traits that athletes have fewer delinquency problems because of "a higher emotional stability, a higher degree of self-control and social responsibility, and . . . more resistan[ce] to the effects of failure." A 1933 editorial expanded these ideas: "Back of the trained mind and trained body there must be that something we call character. A man possessed of the right character will use his mind to benefit society. . . . Sports are [of value] as a means of developing desirable social character traits."[30]

Churches and Uses of Sports and Recreation

Sports became not only a way to teach good values; it also became a way for religions to encourage young men to attend church. Until the late nineteenth century, organized religions in the United States tended to avoid sports and recreation and focused on their spiritual callings. But piety did not attract many young men to the churches. To appeal more to boys, some Protestant churches hired recreational leaders who organized games and leagues. This served two purposes–boys generally came to church or at least to the church building and avoided amusements in taverns. Social gospel Protestant churches added organized recreational activities from dances to baseball. In fact, Brooklyn, New York, churches created a Sunday School league in 1904, and the idea soon spread to other religious groups.[31]

Historian E. Brooks Holifield explained the purpose of these organized activities, "The late nineteenth century introduced new ways for congregations to realize the seventeenth-century ideal of comprehensive influence. If they could no longer comprehend a geographical region, they could still comprehend a wider spectrum of the activities of their members." These churches no longer focused on solely worship; they provided social activities as well. From 1870 to 1950 "churches were open every day for Bible studies, sewing clubs, athletic teams, and scout troops to name a few." According to Holifield, these congregations "substituted committees for sacraments, bazaars for confession, and a collection of functions for community." Some ministers complained that these activities were superceding worship services. They felt that they were "running a show" where

members wanted to be “entertained” and not spiritually “edified.” But all these activities helped bring people together, “For many congregations, participation in a common quest and worship came to seem more important than doctrinal uniformity.”[32] Churches justified their involvement in sports with the concept of “muscular Christianity.” Fearing that congregations were composed of a disproportionate number of women, muscular Christianity sought to attract men with strong bodies and minds.[33]

There were some disagreements with the concept of muscular Christianity. For example, King Kelly of the Chicago Cubs once asked his manager A. G. Spalding, “What are you running here, a Sunday school or a baseball club?" In a sense, the answer for many churches was "a Sunday school."[34] But sociologist Harry Edwards questions the value and asks whether sports always build character. He was not the first to have doubts. As early as 1928 some asked, “Why not stop talking about the noble purposes which sports fulfill and take them for what they are? . . . In short let us cease the elevations of [sport] to the level of religion.”[35]

Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA)

Scholar Charles Page refers to churches' involvement in sports as the "basketballization of religion."[36] Gradually the gymnasium became, as a history of the YMCA called it, "an adjunct of the general religious work."[37] The YMCA was a Christian-based organization not affiliated with any particular sect. However, the YMCA used play to promote general Christian values. In 1844, George Williams (1821-1905) met with eleven other young men in London, England, who wanted to create a Christian atmosphere during their leisure time. Ultimately, they organized the YMCA. The idea caught on.[38] Boston residents formed the first American YMCA in 1851. Two years later San Francisco became the thirteenth city with a YMCA in the United States in 1853. In 1894, when Queen Victoria knighted Williams, the YMCA celebrated its Golden Jubilee. At that time twenty-four countries had five thousand associations and half a million members. [39]

A twentieth-century history of the YMCA explains the organization provided a gathering place for young men moving to the city for employment. Or as several early American groups suggested, the YMCA united “the young men of all the Evangelical Churches for the[ir] moral, mental and religious improvement.” To do this, YMCAs formed reading rooms, prayer meetings, street preaching, and boarding arrangements.[40]

The YMCA pioneered a place for sports in a religious setting by starting a small gymnasium program in the 1860s. Director Luther Halsey Gulick expanded it in the 1890s.[41] He built on the theories of past YMCA directors, arguing that good physical health was essential to life. He described a triangle of the body, mind, and spirit, explaining that each was essential for well-being. "And so we have in our gymnasiums, our educational classes, our libraries' reading-rooms, and our religious work . . . a complete rounded whole." In 1901 an authority on recreation wrote in *Harper's Weekly,* "[the YMCA] deserves the gratitude of the whole country for what it has done for the physical training as well as the mental, moral, and spiritual training of our youth."[42]

Churches and Sports, 1900-Present

Jews

Churches in general continued to use sports as a way to combine traditional and American values. Peter Levine, for example, wrote that "the children of Jewish immigrants turned sportive experiences to their own ends in ways that paid attention both to traditional Jewish communal purpose and mainstream American values." Sports were "a middle ground," combining a "significant American cultural institution to serve ethnic community ends while encouraging their own enthusiasm for full integration into American life."[43]

Christian Churches

While many churches developed sports programs during the twentieth century, most agreed that should be a means to an end rather than the final goal. The Christian churches believed that bringing people to Christ was their major responsibility. But sports could achieve that result if it brought and kept young men at church. Sports provided ways to witness of Christ, teach character-building skills, fellowship with those with similar beliefs, and minister to the whole man–physically, socially, mentally. For example, good sportsmanship allowed participants to practice fair play, kindness, and courtesy. Likewise, their Christian virtues taught in worship could be used on the playing field or in the gym.

Shirl J. Hoffman explains in a chapter on "Sport, Play, and Leisure in the Christian Experience, "The suggestion that sport has the potential for touching our minds and emotions and spirits in ways denied us in everyday life, or that it is like art, poetry and dance can be an avenue of religious expression is radical only because of the distance we have allowed to occur between sport

and religion." Therefore, "can sports, like religious festivals, really nourish an attitude of expectant alertness in players and spectators? Under the right conditions I believe they can."[44]

Hoffman describes some of these conditions. The goal for sports as a religious activity is not winning as it is in other places. "Athletic contests are not times for giving glory to God as much as they are the times for receiving insight from God. They are not worship but they can be occasions for seeing the greatness and goodness of God." For example, mountain climber Frank Gabalein believed "mountain mysticism" was not "true religion," but supported the belief that "climbing can uplift the spirit and give one a sense of greatness of God."[45]

To help promote the type of sports that Hoffman suggested, Protestant sports ministers have published manuals. Steve Connor's *Sports Outreach: Principles and Practice for Successful Sports Ministry* (2003) explains, "Sports has the ability to build bridges in relationships and transcend cultural barriers in a world that is more and more compartmentalized." The rest of the book then discusses how sports can be a way to bring people together by emphasizing rules, sportsmanship, and fellowship.[46]

While emphasizing these ideals was the goal, it did not always happen in practice. Church leaders and members often complained that playing sports tended to bring out the worst in the participants. Baptists asked why church sports had received so many "verbal black eyes." A popular Mormon t-shirt declared, "Church Ball: the brawl that begins with a prayer." Why? Often those who played church ball lacked the skills to compete in school sports. Sometimes the referees/umpires did not understand the rules and could not control the games. Another concern was that as professional sports became more physical, amateurs often followed the destructive examples. Despite the negative factors, churches continued to sponsor sports and to emphasize the positive aspects because they believed the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

A quick search on the Internet shows the variety of church-sponsored sports and the reasons why congregations support them. For example, the First Baptist Church of Clinton, Mississippi focuses on its worship services on its home page. The sports ministry's statement of purpose declares:

"We believe that God is interested in the total person: spiritually, mentally, socially and physically. The Activity Ministry is committed to undergird, strengthen, and supplement the organizations of

the First Baptist Church through sports programs and activities, to seek to lead the lost to Christ, to reach and develop a person's relationship with Jesus Christ for the glory of God and, to provide quality leisure-time activities in a Christian setting and making new friends."[47]

Those ideals are repeated on almost every sports ministry website. The Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, explains, "Ministry is an integral part of life at Prestonwood. From praying to singing to playing sports to gathering for Bible study, there's a place for service and belonging for everyone." The sport's "mission . . . is to glorify God by introducing Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, using the vehicle of sports and fitness in order to reach out to those around us with the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. . . . Anyone is welcome to come–church membership is not a requirement."[48]

Similarly, the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, Illinois, points out that "sports is more than a game. Our goal is to combine fun, competition, and the love of sports with opportunities to build relationships with some great people." Dave Williams, a player, explains, "I came to Willow Creek to just play basketball, but found so much more. I love the people and the competition, but more than that I've developed friendships and learned lessons that I will carry with me the rest of my life."[49]

Two churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), now the Community of Christ, illustrate the ways that these denominations have used sports.

Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church emphasized sports ministries throughout the twentieth century. In 1910 *The New World*, a Catholic weekly newspaper in Chicago, started a regular sports column. Initially it was titled "Baseball and Athletics" since it focused on baseball. Within a year it became "Catholic Athletics" and reported the activities of the National Catholic Athletic Association. The newspaper offered local teams nine free baseball uniforms for every twenty-five new subscriptions to *The New World*. With all these efforts, the publication bragged that it had the largest religious baseball league in America. The next year the National Catholic Athletic Association joined the Amateur Athletic Union.[50]

In addition to baseball, Catholic teams participated in soccer, track, indoor baseball,

gymnastics, wrestling, basketball, and boxing. Chicago's Bishop Bernard J. Sheil created the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) in Chicago in the 1930s. During that decade the organization sponsored basketball, baseball, softball, golf, swimming, track, and boxing leagues and tournaments. In starting the boxing program, Sheil explained, "Kids love to fight. We'll let them fight." A 1930 Catholic pamphlet stressed productive use of new leisure time and asked "every American boy and girl, no matter what their age, [to] aspire to some skill in some sport." While other Christian churches focused on sports for men, the Catholic pamphlet explained that even though women had "less muscular constitutions" and "more delicate functions in life," sports also could help create "a healthier future for the race." As a result, Sheil included basketball and baseball/softball programs for boys and girls and men and women. The basketball program included divisions for students in Catholic schools as well as high school graduates. During the 1930s the Chicago CYO declared its national basketball tournament the largest basketball league in the country. The number of teams participating increased from 120 in 1931 to 426 in 1933.[51]

In 1933 the Chicago baseball/softball tournament expanded to include teams from four states including Utah. The *New World* newspaper declared that adding new teams was important because Catholic youth had been playing with non-Catholic leagues and it was important to have the church's influence in sports. A Salt Lake City priest explained that when the Salt Lake City team came to the tournament: "I wish you would stress the point that the boys are going to Chicago not so much for the idea of winning ball games but because of the support given their pastors in the development of Catholic athletes in Salt Lake."[52]

During the 1950s and 1960s CYOs expanded throughout the United States. Dioceses and parishes continued to plan programs for Catholic youth in their area and often focused on sporting activities for young men and women. However, high-ranking Catholic Church leaders expressed concerns about sports. A 1956 pamphlet declares, "Sports have all the tingling tang of a bottle of soda pop and the intriguing suspense of a fizzling fuse." To avoid the fuse, the pamphlet recommends that participants focus on fun, friendship, strong bodies, and charity because "the matter of winning is entirely secondary."[53]

During the 1940s and 1950s, the future Pope John Paul II also acknowledged the value of sports. He installed a swimming pool in his residence and took skiing trips to relax. He told the

Italian Olympic Committee that he and the church supported sports because of the positive impact on a person's body and soul. Sports fostered self-discipline while promoting fellowship and community. Competition encouraged participants to excel, and sports taught important life lessons. The Pope believed sports encouraged world peace by bringing people together. While championing sports, he discouraged the violent aspects.[54]

In 2007 CYO websites throughout the United States stress that sports can increase participation in church activities and the practice of Christian values. However, these ideals need to be the focus and not a by-product. For example, the CYO in Quincy, Illinois (incorporated as the Catholic Youth Association in 1933) provided leagues for youth and adults. The Archdiocese of Seattle CYO (organized in 1951) also provided sports programs. [55]

Community of Christ (Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, now known as the Community of Christ) traces its beginning to Joseph Smith Jr. just as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Saints does. Followers of Joseph Smith Jr. who joined before and after his death but who did not follow Brigham Young to Utah asked Joseph Smith III, the son of Joseph Smith Jr., to head a new church in the 1860s. The RLDS Church followed other religions and included play as part of its activities during the Progressive Era. In the late 1920s and early 1930s an RLDS magazine, *Vision: A Magazine for Youth*, spelled out the reasons for involving young people in play. George Mesley, president of Our Brother's Keeper (OBK) Council explained that recreational activities were "means of building character. Any activity that does not have possibilities of making better men and women of those who participate in it is unworthy of Latter Day Saints." The article suggested music, dinners, parties, debates, service, and programs.[56]

E. E. Closson, the Director of Young People, outlined activities that included classes, athletics, socials, reading clubs, drama, and music. For athletics, he encouraged "practice games in all sports followed by competition between teams representing different classes, organized leagues in basket ball (*sic)*, volley ball *(sic)*, baseball" and other sports. Literary and musical programs helped young people "make a public appearance and demonstrate their . . . ability. In this way talents are discovered and improved." All these activities "should be encouraged because of their intrinsic value to the individual rather than merely as a means of holding our youth to the practice of

attending the Sunday services."[57] As the RLDS adult magazine, the *Saints' Herald*, declared in 1937, "Youth needs to be led from the mere discussion of religion to the genuine experience of religion."[58]

To teach religious principles, the RLDS developed play programs. The RLDS leaders started a youth conference at the church's college, Graceland, in the 1930s. A 1933 *Saints' Herald* editorial declared: "To find so many young people devoted to the interests and program of the church—to find them such a fine clean type of young people—to listen to their conversation and to be with them for a few days—these things have brought a revelation and an experience that one would have not missed for anything." The programs brought together young people who discovered they were more than their small congregations; they were part of a larger organization. As a result, church leaders saw "better participation of the young people in the general work of the church, a better understanding of its ideals and goals."[59]

Young people became involved in a biannual event known as the "Priesthood Institute and Youth Conference." The RLDS First Presidency wanted the 1935 meeting to be "more than ever before a general church gathering." The theme was "The Living Christ" and activities included classes, "discussion groups, worship services, and musical and dramatic activities." Church leaders hoped that as time progressed "'youth' and 'church' [would] become one in a united cooperative endeavor to build the Kingdom of God."[60] The Church held similar youth conferences in 1939 and 1941. Each year the conference was declared "the biggest and best." Afternoon activities consisted of "informal recreation and fellowship." Young people brought "clothes and shoes suitable for the sport" they played.[61] These programs were replaced after 1941 with local instead of churchwide youth camps each year.

In the 1970s RLDS leaders added a new churchwide program. The idea originated when stakes (groups of congregations) in the Independence, Missouri, area sponsored a volleyball tournament in 1969. The event expanded in 1971, and the first annual all-stake volleyball tournament with thirty Zion League teams and two hundred fifty participants from across the United States competed. The youth who traveled to the competition stayed in members' homes.[62]

The stakes expanded the volleyball program again the next year and moved it to Graceland College, where participants stayed in the dorms and ate at the cafeteria. In 1973 the camp became the "Leadership, Fine Arts, and Sports" meeting. That year the First Presidency announced the

Church, rather than the stakes, would run the program in 1974. However, the leaders added that the event would not replace local youth camps, which would still be run on the stake level. If young RLDS members could attend only one camp, they should participate in the local activities.[63]

The Graceland program continued to grow. In 1973 youth played seventy-four sports. The next year they participated in 14 major sports and 163 competitive games. According to the *Saints' Herald*, "It is believed to have been the largest gathering of senior high youth in the history of the church" with nine hundred senior high students and their leaders. The article continued that sports encouraged courtesy and recreation. But while the "outward emphasis [was] on sports, team participation, and recreation," there were also classes on leadership and arts and crafts. Church President W. Wallace Smith greeted the youth and declared it was "an event that lived up to its name: Spectacular."[64]

In the twenty-first century, Spectacular continues to be a highlight for Community of Christ youth. Almost every year the *Herald* includes an article with many pictures of the event. Outstanding students receive scholarships to attend the activities at Graceland. In 1977, Celia Sherman, whose husband worked with the program, explains that sports remained a focus for the event. When asked if there was too much emphasis on sports, Sherman replied that as a parent she did not think that was possible. She sees sports as the enticement to the event. Sports also helped "develop the discipline of working together as a team or being supportive as a delegation. [Participants] soon develop a camaraderie that quickly overflows to other areas of their lives." Sherman explained that sports "may be the motivating reason for some to come." But they were "stepping stone[s] to the creative program of total involvement." The youth who took part in sports activities saw church leaders in a new light as directors and referees. She quotes a camper, "Keep up the good work. You change lives."[65]

According to the November 2006 *Herald*, "Spectacular is the largest single gathering each year of Community of Christ youth and their friends—an annual celebration of fellowship, fun, and participants' relationships with each other and God." The article quotes the Community of Christ web site, "The mission of SPECTACULAR is to create a safe, Christ-centered community that encourages young women and men to discover God, their inherent worth, and cultivate and express their giftedness." The text continues, "During the week campers can look forward to sharing in all avenues

of the SPEC experience–service projects, communication workshops, basketball, musical instruction, table tennis, stage production, worship, delegation devotions, volleyball, tie-dying, cotton candy, discussions about dating and relationships, learning more about our Creator, soccer, and much, much more." Campers participated in team volleyball for girls, boys, or co-ed, basketball for girls or boys, soccer gold/red teams for girls and boys or co-ed for green/blue teams, and co-ed softball. Individual sports were tennis, table tennis, racquetball, golf, wrestling, track, and swimming.[66]

Summary

Throughout the world, many cultures have blended recreational elements into religious practice. From the ancient Greeks to modern Americans, recreation has been part of celebrations and sometimes worship. British and American societies sometimes decried the evils of recreation and then embraced it as a way to develop young people's characters and persuade them to attend church.

In the tradition of the social congregations, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Mormons included recreation in some church activities. The next chapter introduces the role of sports and recreation in the LDS Church.

1.Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 16.

2.Allen Guttmann, *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of American Sports* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 16-19. The Choctaw still play stickball but without the religious meaning. Teams now wear uniforms, there is a fixed field size, and the game is timed. Medicine men are on the sidelines, but officials on the field control the play. As Guttmann summarized, "Stickball, which was once a constituent element in the tribal culture of the entire Southeast, has become a secularized ethnographical curiosity." Allen Guttmann, *Sports: The First Five Millennia* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 11.

3.Victoria Lindsay Levine, "Music, Myth, and Medicine in the Choctaw Indian Ballgame," *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions*, Lawrence E. Sullivan, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 189-218.

4.Guttmann, *Ritual*, 16-20; Guttmann, *A Whole New Ball Game***,** 19-20; Guttmann, *Sports*, 167-68.

5.Richard O. Clemmer, *Roads in the Sky: The Hopi Indians in a Century of Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 58-60.

6.Guttmann, *Sports*, 44-47; Mandell, 101; Kozo Hikoyama, *Sumo, Japanese Wrestling* (Tokyo: Board of Tourist Industry, 1940).

7.Jane Marie Law, "Japanese Puppetry: From Ritual Performance to Stage Entertainment," *Religions of Japan in Practice*, George J. Tanabe, Jr., ed (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 125; Walt Disney Company, *Japan* [videorecording], 1964.

8.Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, Paul Cartledge, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 108-110.

9.See Mark Golden, *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.), ix-xi; 1-23 (quote from 23).

10.Ibid, 176-77.

11.Eric Midwinter, *Fair Game: Myth and Reality in Sport* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1986), 9.

12.Ibid, 19, 23.

13.Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1983),2-4.

14.Guttmann, *Ritual*, 83-84; Guttmann, *A Whole New Game*, 26-27.

15.Guttmann, *A Whole New Game*, 26-34.

16.Steven J. Overman, *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1997), 26.

17.Rader, 7.

18.Guttmann, *Ritual*, 84, 24, 30.

19.Midwinter, 18-21.

20.Guttmann, *Sports*, 89; Midwinter, 22-23, 30-31.

21.Inger Marie Okkenhaug, "To Give the Boys Energy, Manliness, and Self-command in Temper: The Anglican Male Ideal and St. George's School in Jerusalem, c. 1900-40," *Gender, Religion and Change in the Middle East: Two Hundred Years of History*, Inger Marie Okkenhaug and Inguild Flaskerud (Oxford: Berg, 2005),50, 56.

22.Overman, 24, 27-31. Bruce C. Daniels argued in *Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) that "music and theater struggle[d] for legitimacy and partner dancing was not acceptable, the Puritans enjoyed parties, fun, and pleasure."

23.Quoted in Eldon Brinley, "The Contributions of Mormon Recreation," *The Improvement Era* 48(July 1945):394.

24.Overman, 264.

25.Ibid, 113-33, 67.

26.Ibid., 89-95.

27.Ibid., 96-101.

28.Ibid., 38, 160. Overman says that the seven virtues are "worldly asceticism, rationalization, goal directedness, individualism, achieved status, the work ethic, and the time ethic." The sports adaption became "rationalization, the work ethic, goal directedness, moral asceticism, individualism, achieved status, and competitiveness."

29.Ibid., 44-48, 56-62, 193-199, 217-226.

30.Harry Edwards, *Sociology of Sport* (Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press, 1973), 78-79, 103.

31.Radar, 106.

32.E. Brooks Holifield, "Toward a History of American Congregations," James P. Wind and James W. Lewis, eds., *American Congregations: Volume 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 38-47.

33. This concept is widely discussed in sports history. See for example, Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2001).

34. Overman, 199.

35. Edwards, 317.

36. Overman, 144-47.

37. C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 245-46.

38. Ibid., 4-6.

39. Clifford M. Drury, *San Francisco: 100 Years by the Golden Gate, 1853-1953* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1963), 22.

40.Jessica Elfenbein, "An Aggressive Christian Enterprise: The Baltimore YMCA's Journey to Institutional Credibility and Religious Legitimacy, 1852-1882," *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, ed.(New York: New York University Press, 1997), 23-34.

41. Ibid., 260-63. Gulick was also instrumental in the Boy Scouts. He and his wife formed the Campfire Girls. See chapters 3 and 5 in this book for the stories of the invention of basketball and volleyball.

42. Hopkins, 251, 256-57, 270; Guttmann, *A Whole New Game*, 85. J. Gardner Smith, director of the YMCA in New York, expressed the role of physical activity as much the same way at a YMCA convention in 1887. He described the "four fold purpose" as physical, moral, intellect, and spiritual.

43.Quoted in Richard Ian Kimball, *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 12.

44.Shilr J. Hoffman, "Sport, Play, and Leisure in the Christian Experience," *Christianity and Leisure: Issues in a Pluralistic Society*, Paul Heintzman, Glen A. Van Andel, and Thomas L. Visker, eds. (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1994), 141, 151.

45.Ibid., 152.

46.Steve Connor, *Sports Outreach: Principles and Practice for Successful Sports Ministry* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 15.

47.http://www.fbcclinton.com/pages/page.asp?page_id=5058

48. http://www.prestonwood.org?ministries, retrieved, August 1, 2007.

49. http://www.willowcreedk.org/sports, retrieved August 1, 2007.

50.*New World*, March 26, 1910, 10; April 10, 1910, 8; April 16, 1910, 8; September 17, 1910, 8; January 11, 1911, 8.

51.Gerald R. Gems, "Selling Sport and Religion in American Society: Bishop Sheil and the Catholic Youth Organization," *The New American Sport History: Recent Approaches and Perspectives*, S. W. Pope, ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 300-311; David J. Lord, "Your Leisure and How to Use It" (A Queen's Work's Pamphlet, 1930), 28-29; *New World*, September 25, 1931, 8; December 4, 1941, 10; December 25, 1931, 8; February 24, 1933, 7; February 24, 1933, 10; March 31, 1933, 5-6; September 7, 1933, 11; September 8, 1933, 11; September 18, 1933, 11; November 24, 1933, 14.

52.*New World*, September 7, 1933, 11; Ibid., September 8, 1933, 11; September 18, 1933, 11.

53.John M. Scott, *How to be a Christian in Sports* (St. Louis, Mo: Queen's Work, 1956).

54.Robert Fenney, *A Catholic Perspective: Physical Exercise and Sports* (Grand Rapids, MI: Aquinas Press, 1985), 60-72.

55.http://cyoquincy.com/default.htm; retrieved December 5, 2007; http://www.seattlearch.org/BuildingCommunity/CatholicYouthOrganization/Athletics/; retrieved December 5, 2007.

56. *Vision*. 454-456.

57. Ibid.

58. *Saints Herald*, January 23, 1937, 99.

59. Ibid., June 27, 1933, 803.

60. Ibid., January 8, 1935, 35.

61. Ibid., March 20, 1937, 357; June 25, 1935, 805; February 27, 1937, 262; January 21, 1939, 68; March 18, 1939, 329; July 8, 1939, 841; May 10, 1941, 358.

62. Ibid., October 1971, 26-27; May 1989, 27.

63. Ibid., November 1973, 4, 46.

64. Ibid., November 1974, 41-45.

65. Ibid., November 1977, 48-51
.

66. http://www.cofchrist.com, retrieved on August 1, 2007.

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, fellowshipping, 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 spirts" 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, fellowshipping, 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 fellowshipping 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 Macmilllan 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 Hisory, 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.

Chapter 3

Basketball

While the leaders and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints played several sports, basketball drew the largest participation. Mormons and non-Mormons frequently connected the LDS Church with the American-invented sport. Two examples demonstrate this unique relationship between Mormons and basketball. In 1971, Gary W. Bowie and James A. P. Day reported that Mormons dominated basketball in the Canadian province of Alberta. Mormon immigrants first came to Canada to escape federal marshals arresting polygamists in the 1880s; they settled just across the United States border and established Cardston. At the turn of the twentieth century others followed to establish farms and to find a better life. And the better life included basketball. The first recorded game in Alberta was in 1901. The Mormon community of Stirling played a team from the province's capital city Edmonton. Stirling won 107 to 7. Of fifty-nine school championships in boys and girls basketball between 1956 and 1971, teams (mostly Mormon) from south of Calgary won thirty-two. A few of these schools' players achieved national fame. In 1971 three LDS Raymond men were on the Canadian National team.[1]

In the 1950s Germans related American basketball to Mormons even if no Latter-day Saints were involved. Local newspapers advertised in May 1954 that the Mormon House of David would be playing the Harlem Globetrotters. The team of ten men, according to the report, was traveling with sixty wives. The LDS West German mission president Kenneth R. Dyer was shocked. He had just arrived in Germany in December 1953, and the previous mission president told him that the German government had officially recognized the Mormon Church as a religion and not a sect. Dyer did not expect to deal with sixty thousand posters that said a Mormon polygamous team was in Germany. When the church leader threatened to sue, the general manager agreed to correct the posters and send a disclaimer to the newspapers. Dyer told the United Press, "The German public should know that it is false and almost laughable. U.S. laws forbid polygamy."[2]

Why was there a misunderstanding over polygamy? The House of David was a religious group who believed they were among the select 144,000 that would see Christ's Second Coming. They gathered in Benton Harbor, Michigan where they built an amusement park and summer homes for wealthy Chicago residents. The House of David was best known in the mid-twentieth century for its sports teams, mainly baseball but also basketball. The teams traveled throughout the United States and played local teams. Players for the House of David teams were easy to recognize; the men did not cut their hair. They played very well, but most fans remembered their tricks such as baseball pepper ball (throwing the ball very fast between bases). The group did not practice polygamy, but it was easy to confuse them with another unusual American religion.

And that is probably why the publicist wanted to draw a connection between the House of David and the Mormons. The Mormons were an unusual American religion that some people knew about only because of polygamy and basketball. In fact, during the 1936 Olympics, LDS missionaries helped train a German team and even officiated during the Olympic games.[3]

Move ahead almost twenty years. The German people knew Mormons but not the House of David. As an added twist, Mormon missionaries were using basketball as a way to spread their message. With this combination, the promoters for the House of David team attached the Mormon name. The team was from the United States, they played basketball, and polygamy was always a draw. The prompter just wanted to attract a large crowd.[4]

Basketball in the LDS church goes beyond those two examples though. From 1928 to 1971 the Church sponsored an all-church basketball tournament in Salt Lake City. It drew teams from throughout the United States, and some Mormon publications called it the largest basketball tournament in the world. This chapter explains the history of basketball and the LDS Church's all-church basketball tournament.

History

James Naismith invented basketball at the School for Christian Workers, later the International Young Men's Christian Association Training School, in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1891. Twenty-five-year-old Luther Gulick, the school superintendent, encouraged thirty-year-old Naismith, a Canadian native, to teach a class and develop his idea for an indoor winter sport. Naismith considered adapting several outdoor sports such as football, soccer, or lacrosse, but the class disliked the ideas. One day he thought up a game, developed some rules, and then asked the building superintendent for boxes. He did not have any but offered peach baskets instead. Naismith took a football and the baskets to class. The men were reluctant to try one more new game, but from the first jump ball, they enjoyed the experience.[5]

For the fiftieth anniversary of the game in 1941, Naismith outlined his development of the game in *Basketball.* His five "fundamental principles" were:

1. A large, light ball for play.
2. No running with the ball.
3. Anyone could get the ball at any time.
4. Both teams were on the same floor at the same time but had no physical contact.
5. A high horizontal goal for the ball.[6]

While the game rules changed, the basic concepts remained. The number of players, out-of-bounds rules, and penalty shots evolved in response to play situations. While Naismith agreed with many of these changes, he was unhappy that there was not a jump ball after each basket.[7]

The sport spread quickly. The first game was on December 21, 1891. The YMCA published the rules on January 15, 1892. The University of Chicago started playing in 1893, and the first intercollegiate game was in 1895 when the Minnesota State School of Agriculture beat Hamline. In 1896 the YMCA held a national championship tournament. Within a decade, colleges formed leagues and Christian missionaries took the game to Asia.[8]

Naismith started college as a theology major but left the ministry to study recreation. His sister never saw a basketball game and was a little ashamed that her brother invented the game. The Naismith family believed that athletics and religion should not mix. However, James disagreed, commenting in 1941, "It has only been in comparatively recent years that the churches have accepted athletics as an aid." He added that church basketball started early but slow. A Dr. Hall in New York City formed the first church team in 1897. Four churches there established a league in 1904. The next year Cleveland churches started a league. By 1941 there were church leagues throughout the United States and Canada. While Naismith was still surprised when church officials announced sports events from the pulpit, he concluded, "Whenever I witness games in a church league, I feel that my vision, almost half a century ago, of the time when the Christian people would recognize the true value of athletics, has become a reality."[9]

Naismith explained that the main reason for basketball was recreation and physical exercise. But players also learned to work together.[10] It became part of what Charles Kingley coined "muscular Christianity." Sports taught moral lessons such as "reveren[ce], adventureness, courage, cooperation, loyal[ty], self-restraint, fairness, honor, [and] unenvious approbation of another's success."[11]

Mormons and Basketball

Almost from the beginning, Mormons caught the spirit of basketball. In 1906 the Twentieth Ward in the Salt Lake City Ensign Stake created an athletic program in the junior department. The ward leaders formed two teams with the young men in the ward, and the teams played for a pennant based on attendance at meetings and recruitment of new members. The program expanded to the stake in 1908. The junior boys met two times a month for physical training and then lessons. Combining sports and spiritual training increased attendance. That year the Ensign Stake formed a basketball league and the Twentieth Ward defeated the Eighteenth Ward 28 to 23 for the first championship.[12]

E. J. Milne, a physical education professor at the University of Utah, worked with the athletic committee for the Ensign Stake. In 1908 he wrote about "ward and gymnasium halls" in the *Improvement Era* because of "numerous inquiries [about] adopting a course in physical education or athletics." While some ward leaders feared high costs, Milne explained that wards could make an "attractive room" for "basket ball, hand ball and gymnastic work" with little expense. The article focused on basketball because, according to Milne, it was "the greatest of all indoor games in the country, and especially in the state of Utah." He spelled out room size, window protection, and basketball hoops. While the rules said the basketball floor should not be larger than thirty-five by seventy feet, he explained the game could be played in a smaller area.[13]

Athletic programs in the recreation halls were very successful. In 1909 the Twenty-seventh Ward in the Ensign Stake reported a 50 percent increase in attendance which included nonmembers because of sports. But the program did not continue. In 1916 the YMMIA General Board suggested that athletics be discontinued because the newly formed high schools in Utah were so involved in the game. The matter was referred to the church's Committee on Athletics and Scout Work, and while the minutes did not include the discussion the net result was the end of sports for three years.[14]

The Church leaders soon recognized that they needed to provide a program for young men after Boy Scouts to keep them involved. The first M Men program was formed in the Eighteenth Ward in 1919. The YMMIA General Board adopted the M Men program in 1920 which included basketball. In September 1921 the superintendent of the Ensign Stake met with his counterparts in other Salt Lake stakes, Granite, Liberty, and Pioneer, and they decided to sponsor a tournament The first year there were no rules, and high school and university players competed. John D. Giles who played on the Ensign Ward team recalled there were high school players on the team for the championship. But their opponent, the Thirty-third Ward of the Liberty Stake, had University of Utah players. The Thirty-third Ward won 98 to 2.[15]

Edward Snow, who wrote a master's thesis on LDS all-church basketball tournaments,

claimed that 1922 was the first tournament, but church leaders did not count it because there were no rules. That year the Thirty-third Ward beat the Twenty-fourth Ward from the Salt Lake Stake 28 to 25. The Salt Lake stakes decided the program was so successful that they would hold an annual tournament. Soon thereafter, the stake leaders drew up a constitution with rules. In 1923 eight Salt Lake Valley wards took part in what became the all-church tournament. In 1929, the YMMIA General Board took over the tournament. From then until 1971 the YMMIA Athletic Committee sponsored an ever-increasing-in-size basketball tournament.[16]

Preliminary Play

By the time the all-church basketball tournament ended in 1971, teams from throughout the United States (including Hawaii), northern Mexico, and Alberta, Canada, came to Salt Lake City to participate. To be able to make it to the "big dance," ward teams had to first win in stake competition. The stake winners then played in a regional competition. Stakes consisted of eight to ten wards. Regions were geographical areas that had ten to twelve stakes. The regions varied in geographical size; in the Salt Lake Valley, for example, there were many stakes and therefore more than one region. As the LDS Church grew, however, more men played basketball and church leaders added more regions. Eventually there were too many regions to allow the winner of each to come to the all-church tournament. So the leaders added another level of competition, the zone, which consisted of several regions–the number varied on the location. The all-church tournament eventually had three categories–senior, junior, and college levels.

With all the levels of play, church leaders bragged that it was the largest basketball program in the world. There are no figures to prove this claim true or false. For the 1929-30 season, for example, church magazines explained that eight thousand M Men "who never had a chance to perform on the court [in school had] a chance for competitive physical activity." Another two thousand junior M Men or Vanguards also "played . . . under the same supervision" of the senior men.[17] By 1932, ten thousand men participated from five states.[18] After that year the Church stopped

counting individual players and instead referred to the number of teams. The following table shows the total number of teams registered for each year starting with 1952 when this data is available. While women and girls played basketball, they did not participate in the all-church tournaments so there are no numbers on how many played.[19]

Yr	**1952**	**1953**	**1954**	**1955**	**1956**	**1957**	**1962**	**1963**	**1966**	**1967**	**1968**	**1970**	**1971**
Sr	970	1032	1204	1211	1105	1049	1751	1823	1507	1709	1944	2016	2358
Jr	n/a	n/a	n/a	1161	1284	1386	1855	2039	2262	2262	2453	2603	2814

Local play was important because it was where men learned the game and developed the desirable character traits. Teams also had to win on that level to make it to the all-church tournament. To encourage this development, the YMMIA athletic department suggested in 1950 that stakes and wards start play by November 1 and that each ward team play others in the stake at least three times. The season could be divided into two halves so that more teams could have an opportunity to win a stake championship.[20]

Competition also varied depending on the wards and stakes. Some local units took basketball very seriously, and the players on these teams remembered the local play led to their participation in the all-church tournament. For example, the Edgehill Ward in Salt Lake County focused on basketball and was a magnet not only for the ward members but also others in the area. Paul Hansen, a professor at the University of Utah, ran a tight program all year using an excellent church gym that he remodeled in 1945, complete with a concession stand and locker rooms with showers. Player Brent Eagar explained, “We had a great facility and we used it.” Basketball was so popular that the ward had three teams, A, B, and C. Hansen started teaching young boys to play basketball when they were between ten and fourteen years old. They started on the C team and then worked up the ladder. For Allen Brown, playing basketball was “a confidence builder.” As he worked up through the

teams, Hansen helped him improve his skills and by the time he got to the A team he "felt absolutely the moment I hit the floor with those college guys I was every bit as good as they were." The A team competed against other wards and even some high school teams during the preseason for practice. Then the A team moved on to the stake play. All the wards in the stake "were organized . . . and had some kind of athletic program. . . . The Church provided the foundation, the coordination, and the organizations so that stake play was good." Brent Eagar recalled, "For seven or eight years our M Men team went undefeated in stake play."[21]

In addition to organized games, Hansen sponsored twenty-two pickup games each Saturday to which men from throughout the area came. The men paid a nickel to participate and then waited hours to play on a rotating basis. The winners of a free throw contest made up the teams. The money was used to pay for the ward's athletic programs. For example, the Edgehill Ward sponsored an invitational Christmas tournament. Hansen invited top teams from the Salt Lake area to prepare for the all-church tournament.[22]

Other stakes in the Salt Lake area also sponsored tournaments. Thomas Bagley from the Salt Lake Thirty-third Ward said those tournaments "were almost as fun as the all-church." He described several: "There was always one out in Taylorsville and there was always one in Rose Park. A couple of years there was one in the East High area. . . . There was always one right out by where we lived in Holladay. It was put on at the Olympus Stake Center." The local tournaments usually had sixteen teams, so each team could play three or four games. Bagley's team also played in the county recreation program besides the stake games.[23]

The Grayson Ward in Blanding, Utah, also had an outstanding basketball team. It started out as a town team and competed against local junior colleges. It switched to a church team and competed on the stake level traveling to the other wards in the area, which included Monticello (thirty miles away) and Moab (eighty miles away). The team wanted more opportunities to play, so it continued to play junior colleges, traveling to Grand Junction and Durango, Colorado and Price

and St. George, Utah for games.

Because of all the practice plus having an excellent team, Grayson easily won its stake tournament and went on to the regional tournaments. At first the team traveled to Spanish Fork, Utah, where coach LeRay Alexander grew up. Alexander recalled, "We won all of our regional games. We were in region five the first four years." One time he invited the region to hold the tournament in Blanding, but those in charge complained, "We can't do it. Some of the boys go to the BYU and some work for the steel plant. We just couldn't get away [to travel that far.]" Alexander's response was, "What do you think about these guys? Some of them are in the livestock business. Some of them are in the uranium business, mining or driving trucks."[24]

As the church grew and the regions changed, Blanding became part of a Colorado region. Alexander and one of the players, Richard Perkins, felt that the change was made because "since we'd won all those, they got tired of us and sent us over to Denver which was three or four hundred miles further to play the churches in Wyoming and Colorado." The Grayson team won there as well and advanced to all-church.[25]

Getting to all-church was not always easy though. The Grantsville, Utah, Second Ward won its stake championship and the Tooele Region regularly, but it lost in the South Salt Lake Area tournament, usually to an arch-rival, Wandamere. In 1944 the Grantsville team finally won the right to go to the all–church tournament. Years later the Grantsville participants recalled they came back from an eleven point deficit to win. The team members were proud that they won with style and received the regional sportsmanship trophy as well as the championship.[26]

Outside of the Intermountain area, travel could be even more involved. In the 1960s the Cincinnati Stake included wards in southern Ohio and northern Kentucky. Wards like Fairborn and Kettering were nearly fifty miles away. After playing each ward in the stake twice, the stake held a weekend tournament in Cincinnati. The games started on Friday night and continued all day Saturday. The stake leaders presented the trophies at a stake dance later in the year.[27]

The biggest competition on the stake level in the late 1960s was between the two wards in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati Second Ward had the strongest team and went to the all-church tournament during most of the decade. In 1969 though the Cincinnati First Ward also had a good team. Player Randy Wardwell recalled, "The closest game we had that year that we actually were the all-church champions was with the [Cincinnati Second Ward]." The game went into three overtimes before the First Ward finally won. Wardwell continued, "The only overtime game we had en route to becoming the championship team of the Church was against our rival inside of our stake. . . . It was very competitive and very intense."[28]

From the stake tournament, the Cincinnati First Ward junior team went on to the regional and then to the next level, the zone, in the 1960s. One year the regionals were in the Cincinnati stake center. Wardwell remembered there were four teams; one from Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, and Ohio. Fans filled chairs around the gym, on the stage, and in the overflow of the chapel. The Relief Society and Young Women sold candy, popcorn, and hot dogs to raise money for their organizations. The tournament was well organized and "a step up in the competition." Church leaders hired high school officials to officiate.[29]

From there the First Ward team went to St. Louis, Missouri, for the zone tournament, a ten-hour drive. Forty or fifty people loaded up in cars and drove down for the Friday and Saturday competition. The young women formed a cheering group and wore uniforms of white blouses, red skirts, and colored shoelaces. The setup was the same as the regional tournaments, with fans in chairs and concessions. Wardwell remembered four teams, but he was not sure where they came from. He remembered a team from Minnesota and one from Iowa. He recalled, "We did pretty well in St. Louis. I wouldn't say we blew these teams away, but we were just a really good team. . . . For a church team we were pretty amazing, and I don't think we had a real close game."[30]

The All-Church Tournament Over the Years

Very few of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies interviewees remembered the stake

and regional games; their memories focused on the "big dance," the all-church tournament. Newspapers responded the same way. Even local papers rarely–if ever–reported stake tournaments. A few carried articles about regional play. But once all-church started, the Salt Lake City newspapers–the *Deseret News* and the *Salt Lake Tribune*--coverage of the Mormon tournament rivaled their reports of the local high school and college games. While the Mormon-owned *Deseret News* carried more articles, the tournament was so big that the non-Mormon paper, the *Tribune*, also carried game reports. These papers along with the LDS magazines provide a historical framework of the church-wide tournament. For example, the Lincoln Railsplitters from the Granite Stake in the Salt Lake Valley won the tournament in 1930, according to a newspaper report, because of their "justice, temperance, and courage." That year the winner of a Pocatello, Idaho division, came, the first non-Utah team.[31] The next year, Ogden Fourth from Weber County, Utah, beat Lincoln. Lincoln came back the following year (1932) after winning an interstake tournament and beat Ogden Seventeenth 55 to 26 in the championship.

A 1932 *Improvement Era* article explained, "Season upon season [the M-Men basketball program] reaches into new territory."[32] In 1933 a team from Glendale, California, won the all-church tournament, and the *Improvement Era* proudly announced, "M Men Court Crown moves to coast."[33] An Oakland, California, team won in 1939, and the magazine showed the coach shaking Elder George Albert Smith's hand. A Lovell West Ward team from Wyoming won the championship and sportsmanship trophies in 1940. According to one of the players, Brownie J. Brown, many young men stayed in Lovell between 1938 and 1949 and did not go to college. They created a very successful basketball team that won the all-church tournament three times. The 1940 team also won the Jaycees championship in Atlanta, Georgia.[34] The *Improvement Era* bragged that the "coaches and critics" saw that year's play as "the cleanest and most scientific brand of ball" with "intricate art of screening, checking, and pivoting."[35]

Unlike other amateur sports, the tournament continued during World War II, though with

limited participation. When Canadian teams could not travel to Utah in 1942, the organizers substituted local second or third place teams to fill the slots. Radio station KUTA broadcast the tournament, and the newspaper bragged about a team from St. Johns, Arizona, where the men had learned the game at church; none of the players had played high school or college ball. The team was, according to the paper, "the spirit of M Men basketball."[36] Lovell West won the championship over Edgehill 40 to 27 and claimed the "coveted sportsmanship" trophy. As a wartime fund raiser, the church teams from Lovell West and Davis Stake played high school champions from Utah and Idaho. The Lovell West team lost to a Utah team from Granite, and the Davis team beat the Idaho champions from Pocatello in overtime. The newspaper explained the high school teams "were consistently drilled and better conditioned."[37]

How good were these wartime teams? The newspapers and the *Improvement Era* disagreed. In 1944 the magazine said the tournament was not the best because some teams did not have enough players. Conversely, the *Deseret News* declared it the finest tournament despite the wartime conditions. It was the "best attended" and "one of the most successful." The paper did recognize the wartime problems, but added that having "enough teams to hold a tournament at all is good enough for our M Men fans."[38]

After the war, the tournament returned to full strength. In 1946 the *Deseret News* reported, "With the return of service men and more enthusiasm the church joust should top all other tournaments."[39] A 1947 *Improvement Era* article bragged that those participating had to meet "the most exacting requirements of any league in the country." They included age, residence, medical, church attendance, and Word of Wisdom requirements that members and nonmembers had to follow.[40] Church President George Albert Smith told the 1950 champions from the Brigham City Fourth Ward, "You represent thousands of the finest boys to be found anywhere in all the world. You should prize this trophy not for its intrinsic value, but rather because it stands for all that is good and righteous. Always remember that you could not have won it except for the clean lives you have

led."[41]

In 1954 the tournament expanded from sixteen to thirty-two teams in the junior and senior divisions. In 1958 the Church added a college division. Television provided an opportunity for a larger audience. In 1951 the Church's television station, KSL, carried eight games. While 3,500 attended the games, an estimated 160,000 watched.[42] Not everyone was happy with the coverage though. One viewer complained to KSL in 1954 that the station had replaced his/her favorite television shows to air the regional game that s/he had no interest in. "Did it ever occur to you people that you might do a little investigating as to TV viewers' interests?" the viewer wrote. Instead of showing "some of the best programs of the week," KSL showed "hours and hours of that damned stupid basketball." This viewer's example was not completely accurate, but it showed frustration, explaining that "plenty . . . don't give one damn in hell whether the Fourth LDS Mormon Ward of Nephiville beat the Sixth LDS Mormon Ward of Mantiville." After a complaint about airing LDS General Conference on KSL, the viewer concluded, "So WAKE UP. You may be more diluted."[43] Still, for many Mormons the tournament was very important and very large. In 1970, eighty teams competed in the three divisions.

All Church Tournament–The Logistics

Planning and carrying out such a large tournament followed a pattern. A YMMIA committee mapped the details all year long. Judy Donaldson, the committee's secretary in the 1960s, attended weekly meetings and typed up minutes. Each committee member had an assignment to work with an area such as referees, physical facilities, and trophies.[44] There was plenty of work assigning sponsors (cheerleaders/hostesses), arranging housing, setting up firesides and banquets, purchasing trophies, seeding the teams, and deciding where and when to play games.

The Church covered the costs of rooms and meals for all the players, officials for all the games, tie tacs for the participants, and trophies for all the winners along with other smaller costs. But the tournament was also a big draw. The committee members sold advertisements for a program

and then sold copies to fans. Spectators paid admission. When television started broadcasting the games, the stations paid a royalty. While the entire tournament cost around $15,000 a year, the income was around $20,000.[45]

Before the Tournament

Sponsors

While women did not play in the all-church basketball tournament, they served as cheerleaders, tour directors, and social chairpersons for the teams. The committee assigned each team–especially those from out of town–two young women sponsors from a local stake. The women and their stake "adopted" the visiting team. The young women attended the team's games and sat on the bench. The committee told potential volunteers, "A sponsor is love, faith, hope, and gratitude all rolled up into one pretty package and tied with a beautiful banner that she wears with pride to let the world know who her team is." Another handout explained, "A sponsor is always prepared–she may be found at every ball game, at a variety of parties, from a full-course dinner to an ice-cream-sundae spree, at devotionals, MIAs, and testimony meetings; and constantly going to, coming from, rushing into, and flying out of every kind of activity connected with good, clean wholesome fun."[46]

Sponsors had to follow rules similar to the young men. They had to obey the Word of Wisdom and attend two MIAs and two sacrament meetings a month. A 1947 bulletin stressed, "Under no circumstances are exceptions to be made to the rules."[47] But there were some unique guidelines. Young women were warned not to date young men from their assigned team.[48] Usually two girls worked together, and other members of their Laurel class could help. Suggested activities included food activities or house parties with games or dancing. The sponsors had to wear a white blouse and dark skirt and seamless hose in a natural color. They also wore a gold and green banner. They could not chew gum. They were encouraged to "let [their] personality radiate to others" and if they did, they would have a "choice, long remembered experience."[49] Volunteering was a one-time opportunity. Sponsors could not repeat so other girls had a chance.[50]

This social interaction was an added bonus to the tournament. Bary Gammell helped coach his Las Vegas junior team because he was too old to play. The team sponsors were two high school juniors who attended East High School in Salt Lake City. The young women invited their girlfriends and the team to their homes. Gammell recalled, "There was one girl who caught my eye, Jan Schulze." The two wrote, and when Gammell came to Weber State College his sophomore year, they started dating. After his mission, they married. He summarized, "Through the all-church tournament we came together. Now we've been married for thirty-five years." For him "my most exciting thing for all-church was meeting my wife."[51]

Richard Hirtzel from southern California enjoyed seeing Salt Lake City with his team's sponsor. She came to California to visit, and the team took her to the beach. Ray Messegee's team enjoyed the dances and social activities that the sponsors provided for them. Over the years other players received Christmas cards from the girls. He added having the cheerleaders "was fascinating. That social part of the program was something we didn't expect. We were all expecting to play basketball, not to have such a rich social life while we were in Salt Lake City."[52]

The young women also enjoyed the experience. Helen Gee always wanted to be a sponsor, and she was excited to be selected in 1962. Her aunt made her a black dress to wear to the opening program, but it fell apart on the way to the opening tournament meeting. She had to be pinned in and then had to replace the dress. To add to her misery, her team did not come to the tournament. She cried, so basketball committee member Ned Winder found a Springville, Utah, team that she could work with. Gee went to the team's games and showed them around town with her father's assistance since she could not drive. The team's ward was impressed, and the bishop invited her to speak at a sacrament meeting in Springville.[53]

Facilities

The general committee had to find places to play the games. While the tournament was usually held in Salt Lake City, during some years in the 1950s the senior tournament was held at

Brigham Young University in Provo and the junior tournament at Utah State University in Logan. These tournaments used the university fieldhouses and stake centers.[54]

When the tournament was in Salt Lake City, Richard Ball, the tournament director and a member of the YMMIA General Board, remembered, "We used at least twelve or more stake centers."[55] Even though they were all church owned, the wards and stakes rented them for special activities, and the YMMIA paid for the use. According to the 1962 Polk City Directory, there were eight gymnasiums (including four owned by the LDS Church–Deseret Gym, Highland Stake Gymnasium, Pioneer Stake Gymnasium, and Riverside Stake Gymnasium) in the city. There were over one-hundred halls, over two-thirds of which belonged to the LDS Church. The tournament paid to use halls and gyms across the city including Edgehill (1740 South 1500 East), Liberty Wells (707 North 400 East), and Pioneer (126 West 500 South). Like the teams' home floors, some of the courts did not have a lot of room for fans and some were not regulation size.[56]

The main venue was the Church's Deseret Gym. Church President Joseph F. Smith announced the gym's construction in 1907, and it opened in September 1910. The building was 90 feet wide, 150 feet long, and three stories high. The gymnasium or "Main Hall" was 71 by 146 feet with a 32 foot ceiling. Over a thousand spectators watched games from the third floor. Church leaders tore down this building in the early 1960s to make room for a new church office complex and parking. In January 1965 they dedicated a new 114,000 square foot, two-level building. A large court split into two complete basketball courts or opened into one with more room for spectators. The "new" Deseret Gym gave way to the Conference Center in 1997. Unlike local LDS meetinghouses, the Conference Center does not have a basketball court.[57]

The Deseret Gym was a shock to teams who came from small ward facilities. Richard Adams explained it was "huge. . . . The floor looked bigger than what we had played on before. I don't know if before we didn't have to run all the way or what but all of sudden the floor looked bigger than what we had played on before. It was like a real gym."[58] William Green played for the Thirty-

third Ward in Salt Lake City, and their games were in the Hillcrest Ward. "They had a small recreation hall. It wasn't a full size court like we had when we went to regionals . . . at the old Deseret Gym."[59] Others were not as impressed. Richard C. Goddard remembered that the first Deseret Gym was a "pretty good size" but "it was nothing like the newer facilities. It was kind of musty inside."[60] Richard Hirtzel came from southern California where "they didn't heat the gyms." As a result, the Deseret Gym "was so hot. . . . It seemed like it was about eighty degrees. We were not accustomed to playing basketball in hot gyms."[61]

Fans liked to go to the Deseret Gym to play basketball and to attend the all-church tournament. Ray Hale went to the games as a boy and remembered seeing Wyoming teams win in the 1930s and 1940s. Going to the tournament was "like the Super Bowl" for Hale. "We would sit on the wrestling mats placed on the wooden bleachers under the baskets to protect the ball players from injuries. There we would sit and watch the games from morning until late at night." In 2003, Hale still remembered the Doer boys from Lovell, Wyoming, and Royal Jensen from the Hollywood Ward who shot underhand. "What a sight to see these 'old fashioned deadly shots.'" As Hale got older he helped with the score board that the newspaper provided. "We crawled up into the scoreboard box and watched the game through a small opening. Whenever a team scored, we turned the film to the correct score which was projected onto a glass plate which was seen by the audience." He also changed the players' names that were listed on the scoreboard.[62]

Thomas Bagley remembered the Deseret Gym held "a couple of thousand people." But attendance increased so much in the 1950s that the committee rented the University of Utah fieldhouse for the finals.[63] According to newspaper accounts, three thousand five hundred saw the first final at the U of U field house and an estimated one hundred sixty thousand watched it on KSL. In 1953 four thousand five hundred saw the game at the U.[64] Allen Brown from the Edgehill Ward was impressed with both the Deseret Gym and the U because of the large crowds. "None of us had ever had the experience of playing in that setting and in that kind of atmosphere. The Deseret Gym

and the fieldhouse were just filled."[65]

The players were most interested in the games and not the facilities. While a few interviewees mentioned that they played at the Deseret Gym or at another stake center, they made very few comments about the floor or the fans. The goal was to play and win, not to notice much about the surroundings.

Travel

As many teams came from outside the Salt Lake Valley and Utah, teams sometimes traveled long distances. Usually they paid their own travel expenses, but for some reason–maybe distance--Neldon Evans remembered that the Church paid for the gas (which was about fifteen cents a gallon). The team came in a car caravan from Susanville, California, in the 1930s and stayed over night in Battle Mountain, Nevada. The players bought their own meals enroute.[66]

In 1962 Ray Messegee's Fort Lewis, Washington, team of military men drove to the all-church tournament. Messegee, the coach and a player, his wife, his three-year-old daughter, and his seven team members piled into a station wagon. They hit a snowstorm at Dead Man's Pass near Pendleton, Oregon. When Messegee noticed a "shiny thing in a kind of a ravine," he stopped and discovered the top of a car. An LDS family with five children was trapped in the car and freezing. They had been there for a day, and they had run out of gas. There was no traffic since the road was closed after the family and the team got on the road. Messegee took the family twenty-two miles to the nearest town and left the players in the car. He then hired a tow truck and returned for the family's car."[67]

Richard Adams's Dallas team came on a Continental Trailways bus. A nonmember whose family belonged to the Church financed the trip with no-interest loans to the team members' parents. Since there were no interstate highways, "we had to come [to Salt Lake City] some weird way using U.S. highways and eventually got to Denver." Driving from Denver to Salt Lake City on Highway 40 was dangerous because of the switchbacks over Rabbit Ears Pass.[68]

In 1947 the Glenwood, Alberta, team was the first Canadian team to attend the all-church tournament following World War II. The players were in their late twenties and all were married but one (and he was engaged). They raised funds and drove through icy cold conditions, sharing the road with poor drivers. The team members teased their sponsor, telling her that they came by dog sled to the U.S. border and then bought a car to get to Salt Lake City.[69]

Housing and Meals

Once the teams arrived in Salt Lake City the Church paid for lodging and meals. The Grantsville team all stayed in one room at the Hotel Utah. Richard Adams's team stayed at the New Ute Hotel which had showers down the hall from the rooms. But Adams and two teammates stayed in the bridal suite, so they had their own bathroom and shower. The New Ute Hotel was torn down to construct the new Deseret Gym, which was then replaced by the Conference Center. Bary Gammell stayed in the Carlton Inn on South Temple. Gary Fish remembered, "The Church put us up when we got here in Travelodge and places like that." In 1962 teams stayed in ten Salt Lake City motels.[70]

One of the hotels, the Se Rancho Motor Hotel and Coffee Shop advertised in the 1962 Polk City Directory that it had most modern conveniences. These included swimming pools, "restful grounds," and "new radios and televisions with power antenna." Covey's New American Motel (later Little America) was also up-to-date with 320 rooms, swimming, and Hot Shoppes, "food for the whole family."[71] Staying in a motel was a "big time" for Dale Christensen from Blackfoot, Idaho. "We were just kids from a little farming town and we were in the big city. That was quite an experience."[72]

The tournament was not always held in Salt Lake City. Games sometimes were played in Ogden at Weber State College, in Provo at Brigham Young University, and in Logan at Utah State University. When the tournament was held in Provo in 1957, Bob Anderson's Mesa, Arizona, team stayed in local motels with four players per room. Ray Hale's team stayed on BYU campus with six

in a dorm room.[73] In 1958 the teams stayed at the Hotel Roberts, a deluxe accommodation at 192 South University Avenue in Provo that advertised it was the "home of the traveler." The rest stayed in motels including Riverside, El Rancho Uria, Lund Western, Calder, Provo, and Hillcrest motels. They were all small, locally run facilities like the family-run Lund's Motel at 250 South University Avenue. The annual tournament report included a list of men, the number of days stayed, and the rates. Most of the rooms cost $1.50 per night, although some were $2.00. The total cost for housing the players in Provo that year was nearly $2,000.[74]

In Salt Lake City the teams often ate at the Harman Café at 250 West North Temple. While the first Harman's Original Pancake House with Kentucky Fried Chicken was in Murray, the North Temple café was one of three Harman Cafes in Salt Lake City in 1962. Gary Fish enjoyed that experience. "I remember we used to eat in Harman's Chicken. It was great. That was long before Kentucky Fried Chicken was really known about too much. We loved that." Richard Adams remembered a punch card for meals at the coffee shop in the Hotel Utah. "It was just a first class thing." Bruce Dickerson recalled that each player received three dollars a day for food. In 1967 players ate at Temple Square Motel, which had a restaurant connected to the motel, Hot Shoppes (Marriott-owned), at 543 South Main, and Village Grill at 1308 Foothill Drive. When the tournament was in Provo, Bob Anderson recalled that the teams ate in the Joseph Smith Building cafeteria. They had a punch card and got breakfast, lunch, and dinner.[75]

As with the basketball facilities, few interviewees talked about the motels and food. Of course, local teams stayed at home; occasionally other teams stayed with family or friends. Some interviewees talked about "hanging out" in their motels as they waited for games to start. But they did not say anything else about where they stayed or what they ate. Again, the games were the major focus.

The Tournament

Running the Tournament

Once the tournament started, the athletic committee and staff worked all the time. Staff members were paid, but they worked more than forty hours a week. The committee were volunteers and took vacation time from their jobs or time away from their self-owned businesses to make sure the tournament was covered. Secretary Judy Donaldson stayed at the Deseret Gym all day, collecting scores and distributing them to newspapers. She also prepared a church bulletin for the players, coaches, and fans called the *Double Dribble*. Often she opened the door in the morning and then locked the gym at night. Richard Ball assigned officials and tickets takers. He took vacation from work and went "from early morning until the evening."[76]

Special Activities

The all-church tournament was held in March each year, usually just before the Utah high school tournament. Each year it followed the same pattern. Before the games, church leaders invited all the players and their coaches to a spiritual meeting, known as a fireside, in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Temple Square. The players dressed up in their Sunday clothes. A church leader spoke about sportsmanship and the role of sports in the gospel. According to Judy Donaldson, "It started the tournament off on the right foot. It got them together in a setting where they were receiving instruction and guidance from someone they should look up to."[77]

Games started early Monday morning. That evening there was an opening ceremony. W. O. Robinson, the father of the Church's activity program and the field secretary, planned a "grand entrance march." The players came in their uniforms, led by their sponsors and entered the gym "at the sound of the trumpet." Couples from Mexico, Canada, and the United States then appeared on the floor in costume. According to Robinson this was "a little pageant idea." Someone sang "God Bless America" because according to Robinson it was "good march music." The audience sang the "Star Spangled Banner." The program was the same every year.[78]

During the week, the players and their coaches attended a banquet. Some teams had already been eliminated, but the YMMIA leaders encouraged them to stay and continued to pay their

expenses so they could meet church leaders. Richard Hirtzel, a non-Mormon, was impressed when President George Albert Smith spoke, "He was a very humble man and very sincere." Despite illness and the recent death of his wife, Smith "showed a lot of interest in us."[79]

Mormon basketball player Boyd Benson sat by YMMIA leader Oscar A. Kirkham, who told him they would win. Later Benson was sure he meant it generally, but the statement impressed him because Kirkham was interested in their success. J. Reuben Clark, a member of the Church's First Presidency, spoke at the banquet in the Beehive House and told the players they were heroes and stars on the court but they needed to be heroes and stars in life.[80] But not everyone was impressed. Some men just wanted to play basketball and did not see the point of the activities. After listening to President Smith, Edgehill player Paul Eagar assumed the meal and program were held "just to broaden our cultural appreciation I guess."[81]

When the junior tournament was in Logan, everyone was required to attend a "how-dee-do [howdy] lunch" and the opening ceremonies. The instructions explained, "This is an improved Church activity. It is a fundamental part of our religious lives. Its purpose, aside from a wholesome leisure time activity, is to bring non-church members into the realm of influence of our Church and to build faith and strengthen testimonies of those who already belong. We hope due consideration will be given your spiritual activities as you engage in the physical and social activities afforded by the tournament."[82]

The Games

For most participants the real memories came from playing the games. The committee attempted to "seed" the teams so that the top groups did not eliminate each other early in the rounds. But unlike the NCAA and high school tournaments, church leaders did not have records nor understand the strength of each team. Frequently an unknown team beat out the favored winners. The double-elimination format ensured that every team played at least two games. Those who lost the first night played in the consolation bracket. The second loss meant that the team's playing time

was over. Rather than just awarding the ultimate winner, the tournament continued play and the committee announced the first through eighth place winners.

Frequently the Edgehill Ward was seeded high, probably because of its outstanding gym and program. But although it went to all-church four times that Brent Eager remembered, it never won the tournament. Still, according to Eager, the teams were good and "never an embarrassment." Those four years Edgehill placed second twice; third once and fourth once. Eagar especially recalled the "agony of defeat" one time when his team placed second. Eagar fouled Preston Merrill of Brigham City Fourth in the final seconds of the game. Merrill could have won with the free throws. Fortunately for Eagar, he missed them, but unfortunately for the Edgehill Ward, Brigham City won in overtime.[83]

Although they never won the all-church title, teams in the Salt Lake Valley and throughout the Church considered Edgehill the ward to beat. Boyd Benson, a Maywood Ward, California, team member, remembered beating Edgehill in 1949. Edgehill was seeded number one. Maywood met them after beating Harrisville and Logan Fifth. The California team could not stop the Edgehill center without double teaming him. That left someone that was not guarded. But even double teaming did not stop the center, and Edgehill Ward beat Maywood. Benson was impressed that the Edgehill Ward team came to the final game and cheered for the Maywood team. "They were very good sports."[84]

When the Grantsville Ward team made it to all-church in 1944, they beat teams from Oregon, Idaho, and Wyoming to get into the championship game. The final game was against Plain City, Utah. The team impressed the newspapers and its opponent. The *Deseret News* called the players "a great squad of sharpshooters and nifty ball handers." At a banquet honoring the Plain City team a poem highlighted each player and then described the team's final opponent. "The rub game came on Saturday night/Grantsville a team real strong/It was no disgrace to lose to them/Feeling bad would be dead wrong/So here you are 'Church runners up."[85]

LeRay Alexander, the coach of the Grayson Ward from Blanding, Utah, bragged that his team went to the all-church tournament six years in a row and won twenty-three out of thirty games. Because they always finished in the top eight teams, he explained, "They never could eliminate us." Neldon Cochran, who later played on the Grayson team, turned down a basketball scholarship to Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, to attend BYU. He did not have a scholarship to play for the university, so he played on the Provo Ninth Ward team. He remembered that his team was doing well until "we hit Grayson. That was another story. They were good ball handlers, good shooters, had good height. They were tough. They finally beat us by maybe ten points for the championship." The *Deseret News* bragged, "This Grayson team is one of the most colorful to claim a finals berth. Coming from one of Utah's small communities, the Grayson players have performed all the way like city slickers."[86]

Like other players, Randy Wardwell remembered every game on Cincinnati's way to the championship in 1969. The first game was against Kearns Fourteenth. There were games at 4:30, 5:45, 7:15, and 8:30 in the gym. "You can just kind of get a mental picture of this gymnasium. It was full of people walking around and referees and whistles blowing. It was really well organized. It was awesome." Cincinnati won by fourteen points.[87]

The second night the Cincinnati First Ward juniors played a team from Phoenix. They had three players over six feet; the tallest was 6'8". The Cincinnati team's tallest player was 6'1''. "When we were warming up, it felt like David and Goliath." But the team won 53 to 48. The third night the team played South Weber, the 1968 champions. The newspapers expected South Weber to win the championship. Cincinnati watched them the second night and saw "they were very good for a junior team. We knew it was going to be a tough match." But Cincinnati came on strong in the second half and won 69 to 43.[88]

Now the team was in the semifinals in the Deseret Gym. "It was a huge complex" with several gyms. Wardwell remembered, "It wasn't full, but there were a good number of people there."

Cincinnati had watched their opponent from Bountiful play, and the best player hurt his ankle. So Wardwell remembered his team thought, "These guys are going to be easy." The game was tied with thirty seconds left, and although the Cincinnati players were concerned "we actually pulled it out. I did steal the ball and make the basket that gave us a two point lead." After a foul, Cincinnati made two free throws and won by four. But it was a "nervous" moment. "We really thought we were going down there. We learned a real lesson about humility and overconfidence that night." The championship game, held at the University of Utah fieldhouse, was televised. Cincinnati played a team from Westminister, California, and won. Melvin Fish from the Cincinnati team was named most valuable player.[89]

Some teams showed up regularly at all-church tournaments, and people recalled similar stories about them. For many teams, playing teams from Hawaii was a highlight. The gracious islanders brought leis and performed a Hawaiian ceremony.[90] Bruce Dickerson's Logan Fifth-Eighteenth Ward team played a Hawaiian team when he was a senior in high school in 1970. The Logan team took the leis and pineapples and then beat the Hawaiian team. Some fans were upset that Hawaii lost since they had come so far. But Dickerson wondered about the gift. After eating the pineapple, the Logan team was "two-step[ping] to the bathroom." He wondered if the Hawaii team's plan was to make them sick.[91] Others remembered a deaf team from a ward in the Salt Lake Valley that could not hear the whistles. Boyd Benson recalled, "The whistle would blow and they'd keep going and they'd score." They could not understand why the basket did not count. Benson explained, "That was one of the tougher teams that we played over the years."[92]

Awards

After the championship game on Saturday, church leaders handed out trophies and awards. YMMIA leaders and Church General Authorities gave trophies to the top teams, the most valuable player, the all-star team, and the team with the best sportsmanship. Committee member W. McKinley "Mickey" Oswald and his wife fixed a table with gold and green trimmings, the MIA

colors, for the trophies. General Authorities posed for pictures with the players and the trophies. It was a grand climax.[93]

While the teams focused on winning, the church leaders' main goal was to have the men play fair and politely. Some players recognized that; others saw the sportsmanship trophy as a poor second. As Judy Donaldson explained, "The committee really stressed sportsmanship, and they made a big deal out of the team that won." She continued, "How can you not have good sportsmanlike conduct on the floor and then be at the sacrament table on Sunday?" So the sportsmanship trophy was larger than first place and the team received it along with the other winners. The most valuable player was not the one who always scored the most points but "the one that had the utmost value to their team's success."[94]

The Edgehill Ward, for example, won the sportsmanship award twice at all-church. Brent Eagar recalled, "They called the sportsmanship the most coveted award. In other words, it was given for good sportsmanship. We were not only winning, but we were considered good sports. It meant a lot to us." Another player, Allen Brown, found the sportsmanship "a very, very poor substitute" for winning.[95]

The Cincinnati First Ward junior team won the sportsmanship and the championship in 1969. Randy Wardwell recalled, "Our bishop gave us a good talking to and our priesthood leaders talked to us about the fact that we had this honor and this privilege of going out [to Salt Lake City] and representing the Lord. They told us why not set a second goal that if we don't happen to win the championship, let's win the sportsmanship." They did it by saying "thank you, sir" to the referee each time they were handed the ball. When they were called for a foul, they signaled that they knew it was on them by raising their hand. They made no negative comments to the referees. If a player on the other team fell down, they helped them up. When the other team made a good shot, the Cincinnati players said, "Nice shot." "For a while it felt a little bit phony, but after we kind of began doing it, we started to feel really sincere about it."[96]

After the Tournament

When the Cincinnati team returned home after winning the championship, the stake held a fireside and invited all the wards. The team members bore their testimonies. The local newspapers covered the event. Wardwell remembered, "Our public relations director from our ward or stake called" the newspaper and suggested they do a story.[97]

Basketball games did not end after all-church. Just as the Edgehill sponsored a Christmas tournament, the Grayson Ward had a post-tournament contest. Coach LeRay Alexander especially remembered 1954, the year that Grayson won all-church. The tournament in Blanding was already set before the ward won, but they needed one more team. When a Provo resident asked if a team from there could attend the Blanding tournament, Alexander agreed. The all-church committee was concerned. According to Alexander, "The all-church athletic executive wrote and said, 'We don't want you to play any tournaments down there. We don't want our all-church champions to be beat so soon after winning the all-church.'" Alexander responded, "That's not our intention. I've already got this set up, so we're going to go ahead and play it."[98]

The Provo Fifth Ward came to the tournament in Blanding. Alexander said that they had qualified for the all-church tournament but had been unable to attend. When the Provo team came to Blanding, they added two BYU players. Alexander declared that Grayson won despite the extra players. But he added, "It almost ended in a brawl because [Provo Fifth Ward] got mad at us." When a BYU football player almost plowed into a Grayson player and got a foul, the Provo team complained. During a timeout, Alexander told the Provo coach he was willing to play basketball, but if there were more complains, he would cancel the game. Alexander concluded, "[Provo] finally decided to play. But they went home the next morning. We'd housed them and given them at least a breakfast and in some cases an evening meal before the game or after. They went home still pretty sore that they got a bad deal. That was kind of interesting. We were happy that we could beat them with two of the five players that played for BYU that year."[99]

Individual Stories

Playing basketball and attending all-church tournaments was a highlight for the participants. When the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University sent out the request for information, over a hundred people responded. Unfortunately schedules and distance prevented the center's staff from interviewing everyone. Even with the people that the Redd Center interviewed, there are so many stories it is impossible to tell every one. The following stories represent some typical and some unique experiences that show the variety of Mormon basketball. Nearly all the interviewees had positive memories about church basketball, but they were not blind to the problems.

Larry Schlappi–Mr. Church Basketball

Larry Schlappi, "Mr. Church Basketball," played in many all-church tournaments. He grew up in Delta, Utah, and then moved to Fillmore, where he graduated from high school. In 1959 he played on a BYU ward team that went to all-church. After completing college, he worked as a high school coach in Richfield, Utah, and lived in the small community of Glenwood. A group of teachers formed a winning team that went to the all-church tournament five times. One year the team took third place. Schlappi convinced good basketball players who moved to Sevier County to live in Glenwood to strengthen the team. One player lived in a trailer on Schlappi's lawn. He invited another teacher who had separated from his wife to rent an apartment in Glenwood.

The Baldwin Park, California, Ward coach was impressed with Schlappi's play and offered him and another player on the Glenwood team employment if they would move to his ward and play. While Schlappi turned down the offer, he wanted to belong to a ward with a good sports program. When he moved to Orem, he scouted out a ward with high-quality sports and then moved there. As a member of the Orem Twentieth Ward, he went to all-church as a player and a coach. In 1971, the last year of the all-church basketball tournament, his Orem ward won the championship and the sportsmanship trophy.[100]

David Jack Cherrington–"Dreams Come True"

David Jack Cherrington was born in 1942 and started playing basketball with the deacons in his Preston, Idaho, First Ward when he was twelve. The ward sponsored an A and B team since so many boys wanted to play. During his senior year of high school, the team lost before all-church. The next year he attended Utah State University but continued to play on his home team. That year the team went to the all-church tournament. Cherrington said that even when his team did not go to all-church, just the possibility kept the young men playing. Going to the all-church tournament was a "significant driving force in my life."

Getting to the tournament had challenges though. An official, a junior varsity high school coach, called a foul on Cherrington in a regional game. Cherrington felt the call was not fair and did not return the ball. So the official called a technical. When the fans yelled, the referee called the game even though Preston was ahead 50 to 30. The coach and the bishopric complained to the Salt Lake City tournament leaders, and they agreed that there had been a mistake. The referee said he overreacted and the other coach said that Preston should have won. So the Preston team was allowed to advance at the last minute and ended up driving two hours to Montpelier, Idaho, after a hard day's work on the farm. Preston barely won that tournament.

Once at all-church, the team stayed at a hotel and ate at Harman's Café. The players enjoyed the sponsors, especially one LDS convert with a Southern accent. Preston won two games and then lost the third. But it was worth all the trouble. "Even if we didn't have officials, even if we didn't have coaches, even if sometimes our games were delayed or postponed, or we would show up and the building was locked, there would be at the end of the season an organized set of activities with games, officials and score keepers. Then it would be taken seriously. It was a great motivation for us through the season to continue to be active in the program."

Cherrington returned to the all-church tournament as a graduate student. He was attending Indiana University in Bloomington, and the ward chose to go to Salt Lake City even though it was

at great sacrifice. The players missed classes and the professors did not understand why. After Cherrington completed his graduate degree, he taught at the University of Illinois, and his team qualified to go to all-church. Cherrington remembered driving to Salt Lake City with four team members and buying his wife a fur coat because she felt abandoned for basketball. For Cherrington, softball was fun and fostered a sense of community but basketball was for real. It showed that "dreams come true."[101]

R. Wayne Pace–Remembering the Details

Like other players, attending all-church was a highlight for R. Wayne Pace. He grew up in Summit County, Utah, and then went to the University of Utah. In 1950 and 1951 he lived with his uncle in East Millcreek. The ward won the stake competition but lost in regionals. However, the ward presented its team members with letter sweaters. In 1953, Pace moved to the Salt Lake Thirty-third Ward. This team lost in division play, but the tournament needed one more team. The team played an additional game, won, and went to all-church.

Pace recalled in detail each of the games in the tournament. No one expected much from a runnerup team that barely made it. But the team surprised everyone. First they beat Spring Dale from Alberta, Canada. Since Spring Dale had been to the all-church tournament before, "the assumption was that they would walk over us. We won by over twenty points." In the second game the Thirty-third Ward beat the Colonia Dublan Ward from Mexico that had placed fourth the year before. Then Pace's team beat the Logan Fifth Ward which had also placed in the tournament the previous year. The newspaper reported, "Biggest Upset in M-Men History." The Thirty-third Ward lost to Brigham City Fourth Ward in the semifinals. The game was so competitive that a fight broke out. Unfortunately, it was recorded in the first televised game. Pace added, "We would never have gotten any sportsmanship trophies because we were out to win."

Pace returned to all-church in 1954 with a military team from Pacific Grove Ward. The team had to balance their service assignments and MIA. They lost their first game in the last fifteen

seconds. They only had to hold on to the ball, but another player passed, the ball was intercepted, and the Emigration Ward scored a long basket. The Pacific Grove Ward team then lost to a Spanish Fork team.[102]

Edward H. Rich–A Bishop's Story

Edward H. Rich represented a leader's view of church basketball. He was born in Montpelier, Idaho, in 1914. After graduating from the University of Utah Law School, he moved to Van Nuys, California, where he served as bishop from 1963 to 1969. Three of his sons played on the junior team. The senior team won all-church in 1967.

While Rich never played, he was sad when church leaders eliminated all-church because it was an excellent activity for youth. He was excited because basketball was a missionary tool. A nonmember married to a Mormon woman played on the senior team one year. Rich proudly read from the *California Intermountain News*, a Mormon newspaper, "Although the senior team failed to reach the finals, they won a more important prize. . . . Thomas Womeldorf was not a member . . . at the start of the season play. Surrounded by seven fast breaking returned missionaries, including a member of the bishopric, his chances of ending the season as a Gentile were nil. He has since been baptized."

Basketball also brought people together. Rich attended all the games, and other ward members came as well, creating a community. When Rich telegraphed that the team had won "all the marbles," his wife bought marbles and put them in the church's foyer. She also drew pictures of the team members and hung them from the rafter. The team members had reunions and frequently called Rich late at night because he had called them when he was bishop. Rich's twin brother was a bishop in Salt Lake City, and his ward came to the games and cheered on the California team as well, so it provided an opportunity to create stronger family ties and build bridges between two wards.

Rich remembered game highlights. In 1967, Del West made eighteen of nineteen free throws

in the final game and that led to the victory. The next year West could not get off work for the first games, but the team still won. West was supposed to arrive for the third game, but he was bumped from the plane. He arrived just in time to see the team lose by two points.

Rich also recalled some "low" lights. In 1969 a team member reported a Van Nuys player smoking after a stake championship. Rich worried about what to do. The players' parents were inactive, and Rich wanted to keep their son at church. But he also knew that smoking was against church standards. The bishopric decided that the team would not go to region play because it had used an ineligible player. A nonmember father who had a stepson on the team complained that the whole team should not be punished. He complained very vocally. But Rich felt the team needed to be eliminated.[103]

Edwin B. Griggs–The Real Reason for Church Sports

Coach and bishopric member Edwin B. Griggs's 1969 team made up of University of Arizona students had four new converts who started playing after their baptisms. The team won its season and the first rounds. They beat a team with players who attended Arizona State University at the buzzer at the zone tournament. Then to get to all-church Griggs's players had to take their final exams early and borrow cars to drive to Salt Lake City. Unfortunately the vehicle that the starting five players were in broke down in Nevada in the middle of the night. One player hitchhiked to the nearest town to get a part. The repairs took longer than expected, so by the time the carload arrived in Salt Lake City, they had forfeited their first game. They then lost the second game. But Griggs felt the team "won" in other ways. All four converts remained active in the Church and served in church positions–three as bishops and one as a stake president. As Griggs explained, "It wasn't the destination that was most memorable, but rather it was the journey that we will all remember forever."[104]

Summary

The all-church basketball tournament was a highlight for many Mormon males. It was the

largest and best attended tournament among the church's youth activities. Planning and operating the tournament took the YMMIA athletic committee a lot of time. But the stories that the players told made the effort worthwhile. The most important stories were the ones that reinforced church teachings and brought young men and women to religion. In the 1950s, Walter Stevenson, an MIA General Board member, gave a talk titled "Why an All-Church Tournament" at BYU. He said, "We have an activity program in the MIA for one purpose, and that is to develop Latter-day Saints among the participants."[105] The basketball program fulfilled that goal for many.

With the basketball success, the LDS Church went on to offer other all-church tournaments. The next chapter discusses the second largest tournament, softball.

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5. James Naismith, *Basketball: Its Origin and Development* (New York: Association Press, 1941), 48-60; Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of American Sports* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 70-71.

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15. Ibid, 2-12.

16. Snow, 2-12, 43; John D. Giles and Helena W. Larson, "The M Men-Gleaner Silver Jubilee," *Improvement Era* (March 1947):143, 178-81; *Church News*, March 7, 1954, 16.

17.Les Goates, "Eight out of Eight Thousand," *Improvement Era* (May 1930):488.

18. Goates, "Ten in Ten Thousand," *Improvement Era* (June 1932): 484.

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20. Athletic Department, Church Record CR 15/1, Church History Library.

21. Brent Eagar Oral History, interviewed by Benjamin Sandel, 2003, Orem, Utah, 2; Allen Brown Oral History, interviewed by Benjamin Sandel, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 7-8, 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.).

22. Brown, 5-6.

23. Thomas Bagley Oral History, interviewed by Michael Q. Cannon, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 6-7.

24. LeRay Alexander Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Blanding, Utah, 5, 9; Richard Perkins Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Blanding, Utah, 2, 4.

25. Ibid.

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27. Gary Fish Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Alpine, Utah, 6; Randy Wardwell Oral History, interviewed by Michael Q. Cannon, 2003, Lehi, Utah, 3-4.

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31. Goates, “Eight out of Eight Thousand,” 488.

32. Goates, “Ten in Ten Thousand,”484.

33. Goates, “Eight out of Eight Thousand,” 505; “Monarch of Mutual Basketball,” May 1931, 390; “Ten in Ten Thousand,” 484-485; “M Men Court Crown Moves to Coast,” June 1933, 476-477.

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44. Judy Donaldson Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 6.

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51. Bary Gammell Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Midvale, Utah.

52. Richard Hirtzel Oral History, interviewed by Matthew Swenson, 2003, Pleasant Grove, Utah, 7; Ray Messegee Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2004 telephone interview, 4.

53. Helen Gee Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2-3.

54. Richard Adams Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Lehi, Utah, 5; YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Box 2, LDS Church Archives.

55. Richard Ball Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1.

56. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Box 2, Church History Library; *Polk's Salt Lake City Directory* (Salt Lake City: R. L. Polk, 1962).

57. Adams Oral History, 5; Kimball, 67-68, 82; "Mutual Work–The Deseret Gymnasium," *Improvement Era* 13(February 1910):380; *Church News*, November 17, 162, 6.

58. Adams, 2.

59. Green, 2.

60. Goddard, 2-3.

61. Hirtzel, 8.

62. Ray Hale Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1.

63. Bagley, 5-6; Green, 2. Green remembered there were six thousand at the final at the U when he competed in the 1960s.

64. Snow, 112, 116.

65. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Church History Library; Allen Brown, 8.

66. Neldon Evans Oral History, interviewed by Heather Pabst Ward, 2003, 4.

67. Messegee, 2.

68. Adams, 3.

69. Glenwood Basketball File, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

70. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Church History Library; Salt Lake City Polk Directory, 1962; Gammell, 2; Gary Fish, 6. The teams stayed at these motels: Bonneville at 1325 Foothill Drive, Dean's Motor Lodge at 1821 South Main, New Mission Motor Lodge at 855 North 200 West, Seagull at 325 North 200 West, Se Rancho at 630-48 West North Temple, Travelodge at 144 West North Temple, and Western Motor at 317 West North Temple

71. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Church History Library; Salt Lake City Polk Directory, 1967; Dale Christensen Oral History, interviewed by Michael Q. Cannon, 2003, Orem, Utah, 5. The teams stayed at these motels: Temple Square Hotel, Bonneville, North Temple Travelodge, City Center at 134 West North Temple, Western Motor, Little America at Main Street and 500 South, and Scenic at 1345 Foothill Drive.

72. Dale Christensen, 5.

73. Ibid., 4; Gammell, 2; Bob Anderson Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, Mesa, Arizona, 2003, 2; Ray Hale Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, 5.

74. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Church History Library.

75. Adams, 6; Bruce Dickerson Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, Orem, Utah, 2; Bob Anderson, 2; Gary Fish, 6; YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Church History Library.

76. Donaldson, 4-6; Ball, 1.

77. Donaldson, 11-12.

78. W. O. Robinson, *The Church and Recreation: A Resume of the LDS Recreation Program as directed by The Mutual Improvement Association* (np: self published, nd), 119-20.

79. Hirtzel, 7.

80. Boyd Benson Oral History, interviewed by David Hall, 2003, Downey, California, 4.

81. Eagar, 5.

82. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Church History Library.

83. Eagar, 11.

84. Benson, 2-3, 6; Patty Wilkinson Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2004, telephone interview, 4-5.

85. Grantsville file.

86. *Deseret News* article from Richard Perkins scrapbook, copy in author's possession.

87. Wardwell, 7-9.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Michael Taylor Oral History, interviewed by Heather Pabst Ward, 2003, Lehi, Utah, 2.

91. Dickerson, 2, 4

92. Benson, 1-2.

93. Donaldson, 6.

94. Ibid., 11-12.

95. Eagar, 5; Brown, 4.

96. Wardwell, 8.

97. Ibid., 10.

98. Alexander, 5.

99. Ibid.

100. Larry Schlappi Oral History, interviewed by Susan Wheelwright, 2003, Orem, Utah.

101. David Jack Cherrington Oral History, interviewed by Susan Wheelwright, 2003, Provo, Utah.

102. R Wayne Pace Oral History, interviewed by Heather Pabst Ward, 2003, Orem, Utah.

103. Edward H. Rich Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Provo, Utah.

104. Edwin B. Griggs, email to author, December 4, 2003.

105. A. Walter Stevenson, "Why an All-Church Tournament," *BYU Speeches of the Year, 1953-54* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1954), 287.

Chapter 4

Softball

"An Arizona dentist cancels all appointments for a week. A Canadian businessman works nights so he can leave the office. Five carloads of men leave Florida. A California electronics worker and his family change their vacation trip plans.

They share two things in common: each man is a championship softball player, and all have the same destination–the annual All-Church Priesthood Softball Tournament in Salt Lake City, one of the world's largest and most unusual sports events."[1]

After basketball, softball was the largest Mormon sport and all-church tournament. It provided a summer time activity for boys and men. In the 1950s and 1960s softball parks were part of the Church's environment. Mormons participated in what some studies describe as the sport with the most participants in America. One reason for softball's success in the United States was that the sport adjusted to meet the needs of boys and girls and women and men. For example, a switch from fast pitch to slow pitch increased participation.

In this chapter, a brief history of softball is followed by the LDS Church's involvement in the sport. A discussion follows that focuses on the all-church tournament and the impact softball had on Mormon men and boys. Unlike basketball, the oversight of softball was assigned to the priesthood, and General Authorities encouraged ward leaders to report the program's success in converting and reactivating men and their families.

Softball History

To the untrained eye, softball and baseball look like the same sport. But those who play and understand the sports quickly point out more differences than similarities. Both have diamonds, but a baseball field is 90 feet on each side and a softball diamond is 60 feet per side. In baseball the pitcher's mound is 60 feet 6 inches from home plate; in softball the pitcher stands 46 feet away from the batter. A baseball is about 9 inches around and weighs 5 ounces. Under the white leather cover are layers of yarn encasing a cork and rubber center. A softball has similar construction but is

between 11 7/8 and 12 1/4 inches around and weighs between 6 and 6 3/4 ounces. A softball is not "soft," but it is not as hard as a baseball. Baseball pitchers throw overhand; softball pitchers throw underhand. Baseball teams have nine players; softball teams have ten. A baseball game is nine innings; a softball game is seven.

Softball started in 1887. Some young men gathered in Chicago waiting for the telegraph report of the Yale-Harvard football game on Thanksgiving Day. One threw a boxing glove at another, who then hit it with a broomstick. George Hancock, the father of softball, then grabbed the boxing glove, tightened the laces to create a ball, and declared, "Let's play ball." Later that year Hancock designed a ball larger than a baseball and two years later published his rules for indoor-outdoor baseball.[2]

Over the years the game developed. It was played at a world's fair where the name *softball* was introduced. In 1933 the Amateur Softball Association standardized the rules. That year the association sponsored two fast-pitch national tournaments–one for men and one for women. The sport expanded and eventually reached its peak in the 1940s. However, according to one study, spectators and participants enjoyed the sport because of "the novelty of watching spectacular underhand pitching performances." As the pitchers improved, there were more strikeouts. The game evolved into a duel between the pitcher and the batter. Pitchers developed windmill and slingshot releases that controlled the delivery and fooled the batter. Team members who played other positions in the game lost interest.

Instead of giving up on softball though, some players switched from fast pitch to slow pitch. The ball and field are the same in both types of games. The major difference is in the pitching style. A slow pitcher must throw a ball with an arc between 6 and 12 feet at a moderate speed. Unlike baseball and fast pitch, the goal is to have the batter hit the ball. The team depends on fielders for outs. As a result, everyone on the field is more involved. The first national slow-pitch men's

championship was held in 1953.

Slow pitch continues to be a popular community recreation sport because people of all ages can participate. Slow-pitch players do not have to run fast, hit well, and field with much skill to have fun. The game can be adapted to players of all ages and athletic abilities. Community programs find softball to be an excellent co-ed sport where men and women and boys and girls can play together. Some studies claim that slow-pitch softball is the most played game in the United States. Fast-pitch softball has become a college and Olympic sport for women.[3]

Mormon Church and Softball

Studies disagree on when the LDS Church first sponsored softball. According to some records, the M Men started playing softball in the 1920s but then turned it over to the elders quorums who often participated in community recreation programs.[4] The Provo, Utah, Recreation Department sponsored an elders' league with only LDS teams during the 1930s.[5] Eventually the Church took over the elders' league. A BYU master's thesis identified eight teams who came from fourteen divisions that played in the first tournament in 1938. Another article reported that church leaders created the all-church elders' softball association in 1940 and held the first official all-church tournament in 1941 but mothballed it because of the war.[6] Newspaper accounts and the annual MIA athletic manuals listed the first YMMIA tournament as 1949. While other community groups held tournaments that included LDS men, this seems to be the official beginning of church-sponsored softball. Sixteen teams competed the first year, and Church President George Albert Smith threw out the first pitch. All participants received a medal, and three trophies were handed out–winner, runner-up and sportsmanship.[7]

In 1954 softball moved from the YMMIA control to the Melchizedek Priesthood. That meant that instead of the YMMIA planning and operating the softball teams, the softball officials reported directly to the stake president. The stake president could select a stake softball director from the

high council or from the MIA stake board. These leaders encouraged all men and boys to participate. If there were too many men and boys for one team, the ward could have several teams. Church leaders argued that softball was more than just a sport; it was a way to keep men active.[8]

Softball grew in popularity because church leaders encouraged members to play. Joseph Fielding Smith, then president of the Quorum of the Twelve, asked all stake presidents in 1961 and 1962 to get teams ready for the upcoming softball season since this was an "important priesthood activity." While he praised the 1960 season as having the highest participation ever, he was sad that half the wards did not organize teams. He explained every congregation needed to participate because "the softball activity is a highly effective tool in converting and reactivating. We commend it to you for those noble purposes and as a means of providing wholesome recreational activity for the brethren of the priesthood." He concluded, "Remember, brethren, that winning games is not our prime purpose. Our activity is such that everyone participating can benefit." But the program worked only if the leaders supported it. According to Smith, "Your enthusiastic support and efficient and early planning are essential to the success of the priesthood softball activity."[9]

There are no records that suggest why Joseph Fielding Smith singled out softball as a priesthood responsibility instead of basketball. Basketball was always a more popular sport in terms of number of teams and participants. It started before softball and always attracted more players. Smith may have wanted softball to grow in popularity because there were opportunities for more boys and men to participate simply because there were more players per team. Also few schools had softball teams, so fewer players were restricted from playing on church teams because of their participation in high school and college athletics. Other than Joseph Fielding Smith's letters though, the basketball and softball programs ran very much the same.

By 1960 the program had expanded to include 28 regions, 53 divisions, 89 districts, and 319 stakes.[10] But still the sport was fairly new in church circles. An informal survey showed that more

Mormons knew about basketball than softball. That year the MIA sponsored the first softball coaches' clinic at Brigham Young University. Glen C. Tuckett, the BYU baseball coach, provided instruction on "hitting, fielding, pitching and general softball strategy."[11]

Local and Regional Play

On their way to the all-church tournament, ward softball teams competed first on a stake level. Winners moved on to division and zone play and then to the Salt Lake City event. A newspaper article showed how the regional play worked. In 1949, eight teams played in the Division 6 playoff in Utah County. A Denver team from the Western States Mission could not afford to come, and the Wasatch Stake, Utah, winner could not participate because the team had ineligible players. The Vineyard Ward from Orem, Utah, won the Division 6 playoff and advanced to the all-church tournament. The *Deseret News* declared Vineyard Ward as one of the favorite teams at the all-church tournament. [12]

D. Mark Hutchings described his route to the all-church tournament. First, his Merced, California, slow-pitch junior team played in a round-robin stake competition where every team played each other in divisions and the top teams advanced to the final. After the preliminary play was over, the teams also competed in a stake tournament. The stake included wards in Fresno, and the teams played their tournament games there. Fans and teams from Merced, traveled an hour each way to participate. The winner of the stake tournament advanced to a regional tournament in Fresno and competed against other Fresno stakes. The winner went on to compete in the Reno/Sparks area. In 1969 the Merced Second Ward did not have enough players for a team, so Hutchings played with the First Ward. In 1970 the Merced First Ward had its own team and won the area championship that was held in Stockton, California. Hutchings was thrilled when he hit a home run.[13]

Year-by-Year Tournament History

The final goal for the local, regional, and area competition was to be eligible for the all-

church softball tournament. Each year that tournament had exciting games, thrilled winners, and frustrated losers. Gordon Norman Oborn's 1960 BYU master's thesis listed all the participating teams and the winners of the senior division fast pitch. He also added game details. For example, in 1939 the Liberty First Ward from Salt Lake City defeated the Palmyra Ward from Spanish Fork, Utah. The game was scoreless for fourteen innings before the Salt Lake ward finally won. The same ward won in 1940.[14]

The 1949 "official" church tournament took place at White Park, a Salt Lake City-owned baseball field. California teams won the first two years. A Wellsville, Utah, team placed fourth in 1949 and third in 1950. In 1951, according to Oborn, "Wellsville was not to be denied the championship" with "rock ribbed defense, solid hitting, and tough hurling." Archie Darley, the pitcher, did an "outstanding hurling job." Wellsville kept returning to the all-church tournament, and even though the team did not win in 1952, Darley was named to the all-star team.[15]

Those tournaments were highlights for Darley. He grew up on a farm, attended one semester at Utah State University, fought during World War II, and then returned to the farm. As a boy, he played softball and baseball for fun. In high school he played in a valley softball league sponsored by local businesses. However, he recalled, "When the Church took over, that made it better. They started having church tournaments." The year the Wellsville First Ward won, Darley bragged that six thousand players and six hundred teams had played throughout the Church. He declared, "Wellsville First which was one of the smallest towns won."[16]

A ward from another small town–Pocatello, Idaho–won the sportsmanship trophy in 1951 and the championship in 1952. In 1953 a Tucson, Arizona, team won both the championship and the sportsmanship award. One reason was that the pitcher George Busby congratulated every runner at second base during the game. The *Deseret News* called it "one of the greatest teams in the history of Church sports."[17]

The softball tournaments continued to grow in popularity. In 1954 the tournament represented the best of the ten thousand players and one thousand one hundred teams. Thirty-two teams competed at all-church, and an Ogden, Utah, team defeated the favorites from Wellsville and Plain City, Utah. But having so many teams stretched the park capacity in Salt Lake City. Archie Darley remembered playing at White Park near the fairgrounds in 1949. When the team won in 1951, they played at Glade Park, a new field near Fort Douglas. The Church rented Derks Field, the professional baseball field in Salt Lake City, in 1954. In 1955 the tournament was held at Jordan Park, and a new church-owned four-plex at 2300 South 200 West, Salt Lake City. At the annual banquet that year, leaders announced the park's name–George Q. Morris Park.[18]

Church leaders named the park after George Quayle Morris, a strong supporter of the Mutual Improvement Association and priesthood softball. Morris was born in 1874 in Salt Lake City. He attended Brigham Young University and graduated from the University of Utah. Throughout these years he worked for his father's marble polishing business. His father died just before Morris served a mission in England. When he returned in 1902, he worked with his brother Nephi L. Morris for his father's business and became general manager and president of Elias Morris & Sons. Morris served twice as president of the Salt Lake Stake MIA. He became a member of the YMMIA General Board in 1924, and in 1935 he became the YMMIA's first assistant general superintendent. In 1929 Morris chaired the *Improvement Era* committee and worked on improving the magazine. In 1937 he replaced Albert E. Bowen as president of the YMMIA when Bowen was called to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Morris led the MIA until 1948, when he became president of the Eastern States Mission. In 1951 he was called as an assistant to the Twelve, and in 1954 he became an Apostle.[19]

The Church paid $100,000 to build the Morris softball complex, which included four lighted diamonds, grandstands for twenty-five hundred people, two dressing rooms, four

restrooms, a press box that overlooked all the diamonds, a refreshment stand, outfields with grass, and parking. The area could host the entire sixty-four-team tournament with thirty-two teams playing each day. Finally, the Church did not have to rent facilities.[20] Later organizers added two thousand seats and two unlit diamonds in 1964.[21]

Joseph Fielding Smith dedicated the Morris Park on June 12, 1956. To celebrate the new park, church leaders invited teams from Utah and Idaho to play. Eight games took place with outstanding senior and junior teams. After the exhibition games, Smith spoke and explained that completing the facility fulfilled a long-time dream. While the newspapers carried short articles and summaries of Smith's comments about the park, there are no records of his speech or prayer.[22]

Later in 1956 San Antonio, Texas, won the tournament. San Diego, California won the next year defeating Wellsville. In 1958 a Mesa, Arizona, ward won; Wellsville placed seventh. The final game in 1958 was televised for the first time. A Snowflake, Arizona, ward beat a Mesa, Arizona, ward in 1959. Arizona continued to dominate, and a Mesa ward won in 1960.[23]

Some of the same teams came to the all-church tournament nearly every year. Other years new wards sent teams. Oborn summarized the tournament participants up through 1960 when he wrote his thesis. He listed two hundred teams who placed in the top eight from 1949 to 1960. Teams from five states won the championship led by Utah who won five and Arizona who won four. Teams from four states received the sportsmanship award led by Utah who won six and Idaho who won three. Wellsville First Ward came to the tournament nine times, the most of any ward. A Pleasant Green, Utah, ward placed in the top eight teams a record seven times, every time that it attended.[24]

Oborn's thesis only reported fast pitch seniors. But that was not the only division. As in basketball, juniors competed in fast pitch softball as well. The tournament was called all-church, but at least in 1957 and 1958, nearly all the teams came from Idaho and Utah, mostly from the

Salt Lake Valley. When the church softball committee added slow pitch for seniors and juniors in 1961, the leaders explained it would continue if it worked. By 1965 more teams played slow pitch than fast in both senior and junior divisions.[25] The following chart shows the total number of teams and the increasing popularity of slow pitch over fast pitch from 1957 to 1972. Records were not available for every year.

Yr	**1957**	**1958**	**1965**	**1966**	**1967**	**1968**	**1969**	**1970**	**1971**	**1972**
Sr	n/a	n/a	1,695	1,814	1,931	2,063	2,116	2,268	2,216	1,729
fast	1,125	1,245	678	602	570	512	481	426	407	221
slow	n/a	n/a	1,017	1,212	1,332	1,463	1,595	1,766	1,819	1,385
Jr	n/a	n/a	1,688	1,826	1,907	2,071	2,156	2,211	2,216	1,473
fast	978	1,059	718	643	570	450	443	411	263	185
slow	n/a	n/a	970	1,183	1,316	1,621	1,640	1,733	1,723	1,188

The *Improvement Era* did not carry softball articles as it had basketball information in the 1930s. But the magazine did list the softball tournament winners. In 1959 nearly all the teams in the finals in all four divisions were from Arizona and California. In 1961 Arizona dominated; junior teams from Chandler and Queen Creek competed for the championship. There was a more even split between Arizona, California, and Utah in 1963; rain delayed the tournament, but there were still 135 games played during the week.[26] That year the slow-pitch finalists were all teams from Utah.

In 1968 the tournament represented the best of four thousand teams and ninety-six teams competed at all-church; there were thirty-two senior and junior slow-pitch teams and only sixteen junior and senior fast pitch.[27] The 1970 tournament also had ninety-six teams representing five thousand teams from thirty-seven zones.[28] In 1971 fifteen hundred players on one hundred twelve teams came from across the United States.[29] These figures show that the tournament remained

very popular over the years. Like the rest of the nation, the all-church teams switched from fast pitch to slow pitch but interest in softball remained strong.

The All-Church Tournament

As with basketball, the all-church tournament required a lot of preparation and money. The Church committee covered the expenses of the tournament by charging an admission to games, selling concessions, and collecting a three-dollar registration fee for every team that participated in church softball. The tournament raised less money than basketball, but it also did not cost as much to run. The annual reports showed a small profit without counting the registration fees.[30]

Teams had to get to Salt Lake City and have places to stay. Until the George Q. Morris complex was built, the teams had to rent the parks throughout Salt Lake City. As with basketball, players mostly remembered the games, but they sometimes referred to the details. Unlike basketball, there were no local young women sponsors. Other than that, the details between the softball and basketball tournaments were very similar to the larger tournament.

Travel and Lodging at All-Church

Participating teams had to deal with the logistics of getting to Salt Lake City. Most teams drove. They stayed with members and slept in churches, or occasionally the Church paid for hotel rooms. In 1954 three teams slept on the Deseret Gym floor. One player complained, "We play ball during the day and sleep on floors that are hard as rocks at night." One team cooked their meals at a park. Wendell Eyring's team came from Queen Creek, Arizona, in three cars. He was not sure who paid for the gas, but the Church paid for the housing and meals at the University of Utah.[31] In 1969 and 1970, D. Mark Hutchings remembered traveling from Merced, California, in a new car. His grandmother lived in Salt Lake City and several team members stayed there or with their Utah relatives.[32]

Opening Activities

The church leaders and softball committee wanted to be sure the youth and their coaches kept the spiritual purpose in mind. Committee members and General Authorities often spoke at a fireside in the Salt Lake Tabernacle before the tournament started. These included Marion D. Hanks, a Seventy, in 1957; Elder Mark E. Petersen in 1968, Elder Marion G. Romney in 1970, and Elder Delbert L. Stapley in 1971.[33]

Elder Ezra Taft Benson gave a typical devotional address on August 21, 1966. He started out explaining this was a tournament of champions because they had to win other tournaments to qualify. While the games would be a "challenge" and "explosive," that was not the main goal. Softball was "a part of the great program to build men." There were "problems, sure," but the games served a bigger purpose. "As we go into this great church softball tournament of champions may we not forget that much greater ball game of life. May we all be champions in that all important tournament." In conclusion, Benson offered a blessing. "May [the tournament] bring joy to our hearts, may it teach you valuable lessons, may it make you appreciate more fully the rich program of the church, the purpose of which is to build men and women of character and strengthen and deepen spirituality."[34]

Four years later, in 1970, the program followed a usual format. A mixed chorus performed musical numbers. The congregation sang an MIA hymn, "Carry On." Wayne Player from the softball priesthood committee conducted the meeting. Ben E. Rawlings from the Ensign Stake Committee gave the opening prayer, and YMMIA athletic committee member Malcolm F. LeSueur gave the closing prayer.[35]

The devotional in 1970 had a lasting effect on Mark Hutchings, a team captain. The previous year, two members of the joint Merced First and Second ward team had not been allowed to play because they were caught smoking. The General Authority speaker, Loren C.

Dunn, a Seventy, mentioned that experience. Hutchings was sad and told his team that he wanted to make sure that never happened again.[36]

The softball committee also sponsored a banquet for the participants where team members met new people and renewed friendships. Players also had an opportunity to meet General Authorities. In 1960 Clark N. Stohl, assistant to the softball committee chair, asked church leaders to attend the opening banquet, which would "feature spiritual messages from our leaders as well as good entertainment." Stohl continued, "We are certain that the men and boys coming from all the Church will appreciate meeting you."[37]

Of course, food was a focus. The 1956 banquet at the Cannon Stake House featured a fresh melon fruit cup, tomato lettuce salad with French dressing, steak with mushroom sauce, French green beans, potatoes au gratin, relish dishes, hot rolls and butter, and apple pie a la mode. The program featured church leaders. A. Walter Stevenson, a YMMIA committee member, was master of ceremonies. Elders Joseph Fielding Smith and George Q. Morris along with YMMIA committee members Elbert R. Curtis and Clark Stohl welcomed the group. Elder Harold B. Lee presented a message.[38]

There were also opening activities at the ball park. The tournament started with an opening prayer and the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner." At the first game on the first day a church leader threw the first ball or batted first. In 1957, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith threw out the first ball. Every other day started with a prayer and the American national anthem.[39]

During the tournament, church leaders often came to the games. Softball chairman Malcolm LaSeur even added a place for church leaders to sit in the press box and raised the scorers above them. A special highlight was when Church President David O. McKay attended. As he became more feeble, he could not get to the press box so instead he watched from a small parking lot. One time he got out of the car and sat on a stadium chair. Effie Gunderson

remembered, "Some little old guy that was as old as he was came and brought him a blanket." When parents brought their children to shake the president's hand, Elder Ezra Taft Benson insisted McKay wanted to watch the game. But McKay said, "Let them come." Mel Jones recalled a similar experience when McKay came to a game. Although "he was quite feeble" and had to be helped into the park, "he really seemed to enjoy the games. . . . We just felt so happy to have him that interested."[40]

Church leaders' wives also attended sometimes. But Gunderson was not sure they were that interested in the game. Jessie Evans Smith, the wife of Joseph Fielding Smith, suggested Gunderson needed a lazy susan because Gunderson ran around so much. She also offered to whistle to get the game chairman's attention.[41]

Games

While the other activities were enjoyable, the players mainly remembered the games. Bob Anderson from Arizona recalled, "They played four games at a time, all day long, five days a week. It was just exciting. We'd just sit around the motel, waiting for the ball game, get down there an hour early, warm up and go for it."[42] Years later some players could still give a play-by-play on each game they participated in. Mark Hutchings's team won the slow-pitch junior championship and sportsmanship trophies in 1970. That year instead of a single elimination, the thirty-two teams first played in a four team round robin. All the participating teams were divided into groups consisting of four teams. All four teams played each other, and then the top two advanced. Hutchings's team won all the games and was seeded number one from that group. Then the team moved on to a single elimination format. The first game "we won fairly easily." The second game was against a team from Beaver, Utah–Hutchings' father's home town. "This team had some good athletes. I remember the game was very close. Our fielding came into play. . . . We won the game three to two." The next game was against Layton, Utah. "We got off to a

real good start and beat them by eight or ten runs."

The championship game was against a team from Walnut Creek, California. Hutchings recalled, "I know that because their star player was the brother of a girl I later dated." The Walnut Creek center fielder was missing an arm, but Hutchings recalled his fielding was amazing. Hutchings hit a ball "to the gap in right center field." He figured he was fast enough to stretch a double into a triple. He recalled, "I'll be darned that that guy that had the one arm fielded the ball with his glove. They said that he put the glove under one arm. He threw a bullet right to third base and threw me out."

The game was close. At the top of the seventh inning with the other team coming to bat, Hutchings's Merced team was ahead by one run. One of their best players dropped a foul ball, and then the Walnut Creek's best player was up to bat. Fortunately, the Merced right fielder "made a running, diving catch." Remembering all these details, Hutchings concluded, "We were about as excited as you could be. It was like winning the world series basically for us."[43]

Press Coverage

As in basketball, Judy Donaldson, the YMMIA athletic committee secretary, produced a daily in-house bulletin, the *Batter's Bugle*.[44] In 1956 the one-page sheet included upcoming games, results of games from the day before, and some interesting tidbits. For example, the August 24, 1956, issue reported that the Weston, Idaho, Ward was competing for the fourth time. The team had been the runners-up in 1953. In 1956 Weston was playing the Grant Third Ward for the consolation championship. The same issue congratulated Dick McFerson of the Inglewood, California, Ward, for pitching a no-hit and no-run game and three one-hit games during the season.

By the mid-1960s the format had changed. In 1966 the *Bugle* was a two-page report of the tournament, which welcomed the teams and discussed special activities. These included a

home-run derby in which each team could enter four players. There were also some human-interest stories. For example, there was a short biography of George Busby and a comment that losing three toes off his drag foot had not slowed him down. He still played softball, served as bishop, and was the father of eight children.[45]

The *Deseret News* carried colorful reports of the games. Gary Rummler wrote on August 20, 1957, "Plain City started slower than a boy going to the dentist but ended up sprinting as it broke loose for eight runs in the sixth inning" and "South Gate pitcher Randle Romney only struck out one Provo batsman but his teammates led by the sparkling defensive plays of left fielder George Yoder kept the bases clear. Yoder made several shoe string catches that choked off potential Provo threats."[46]

In 1959, the Snowflake Second Ward team played the Mesa Sixth Ward team for the all-church finals. The newspaper commented that the eighteen hundred fans who came to see the final there were about eight hundred more than lived in Snowflake, a small Mormon community about two hundred miles north of Mesa. The two teams had already played in the Division 13 playoffs. According to the *Deseret News*, "The fact that nine such good men could come from such a tiny community . . . is something in itself when considering the magnitude of the All-Church program." The Snowflake team repeated its stellar performance in 1966 when it won the all-church tournament. Pitcher Larry Brewer was the most valuable player in 1959; in 1966 he shared that honor with his brothers Ron and Gary.[47]

Volunteers

The softball tournament required volunteers to keep the score and announce the game. Effie Gunderson started attending church sports after her marriage because her husband coached basketball and softball. She explained, "I was there, so he put a score book in my hand." At one game the umpire asked to see her books and then invited her to be "the first woman to score the

all-church championship." Gunderson went on to serve on the all-church softball committee. She arranged for scorers and announcers who worked twelve hour days. She also reported scores to the newspapers.[48]

Another volunteer, Claudia Shelton, helped because her father, Paul "Red" Shelton, served on the all-church tournament committee and asked her to help. The Shelton family loved sports. Claudia attended baseball games at Derks Field with her aunts and uncles. She recalled, "We never missed a game." But watching was not enough. Claudia explained, "Since Dad didn't have a boy, he taught me how to play sports. That's where I started was softball." In addition to playing, Claudia attended the all-church tournament. "My girlfriend and I were the ones who went to the George Q. Morris Field. We would be the scorers and announcers. We did all the Church softball games. Our ward happened to go to the junior softball tournament and took first place. We were so excited about that. That was just before I went on my mission. We enjoyed it so much."[49] Claudia played softball on the stake level, but there was not an all-church tournament for women.

Softball Goals

According to church leaders, winning games at the stake, regional, or all-church level though was not the final goal of church softball. Church leaders were quick to point out, "The primary aim of the Church recreational program is spirituality."[50] They felt that if young men were required to attend church meetings and obey church rules to play softball, then the things that they learned in the meetings would affect them positively. The goal was not winning but giving everyone a chance to play. So Elder Joseph Fielding Smith focused on the total number participating. In 1961 he bragged that there were 1,408 teams, but he hoped for 2,000. In 1962 the number grew to 1,544. In 1964 he reported 1,662 senior teams and 1,705 junior teams with about 50,000 men and boys playing. He explained that not all these players were excellent at the

game, but the goal was participation–not skill.[51] David Smart who grew up in Rexburg, Idaho, fit that pattern. He described himself as "a second-rate athlete" so he did not play school sports. But church ball offered him "a place for me to test my skills and win this confirmation that I was okay."[52]

Softball also changed lives. These were more than softball players; they were active members and a few nonmembers who lived LDS standards. After the 1949 tournament, the *Deseret News* declared, "What may yet turn out to be the largest softball league in the world, if it isn't already" was successful "far above . . . all the wins and losses of the various teams" because of the "great amount of good accomplished. . . . Many men who have been inactive in church service have been brought back into activity through playing and association with fellow active church members." In 1951, Elder Ezra Taft Benson told the softball banquet attendees, "Nothing is worth the doing if it doesn't make a man."[53] The Wellsville, Utah, Ward showed that could be done with a team of nearly all Melchizedek priesthood holders.[54] The *Deseret News* bragged that the Vineyard Ward in Orem, Utah, which won that Division 6 championship, said that winning was nice but it was more important that all the athletes attended church meetings and held the priesthood.[55]

All of Joseph Fielding Smith's letters to stake presidents asked the leaders to report baptisms and reactivation among those associated with softball. Smith reported 250 converts and at least 350 wives and children who joined in 1963. In addition, 1,600 men and boys returned to church attendance. He added that those figures did not include the "untold number who remained active" because of softball.[56]

In 1966, Elder Delbert L. Stapley, who took over responsibility for encouraging softball from Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, explained that 164 stakes had reported 109 conversions, 90 conversions of families, and 1,179 reactivations; he speculated that if all the stakes had reported,

the numbers would have been 400 converts, 350 families, and 4,432 reactivations.[57] Even in 1971 just before the tournament ended, Stapley was still asking stake leaders to keep track of the number of converts and people returning to church activity. "We are anxious to determine the actual accomplishment from the church softball program."[58]

Another important aspect was sportsmanship. Church magazines declared that the sportsmanship trophy was "sought for" because it was a reminder "of the highest ideals of the world's biggest and cleanest softball."[59] Monitor C. Noyce wrote in the *Church News* in 1954, "While there were as many losers as winners, the vanquished were quick to congratulate the winners and the winners in turn gave the losers a pat on the back for playing a fine game." W. Floyd Millet, the tournament chairman agreed, "I was delighted with the tournament as a whole and with the fine grade of teams participating. I thought the teams played well and conducted themselves in a fine manner."[60]

As part of the 1963 softball report, committee member Dale R. Curtis included a letter from W. Floyd Millett, also a committee member and later a BYU basketball and football coach, to Elder Ezra Taft Benson. After quoting President David O. McKay that all young men should play, Millett explained that wards with strong athletics programs also had strong Aaronic Priesthood programs. Softball "strengthen[ed] testimonies" and "point[ed] the way to missions and temple marriages."

To demonstrate that statement, Millett included letters from Wayne B. Hales, a BYU stake president, and James E. Hill, the bishop of the Jacksonville, Florida, Fifth Ward. Hales said that his team lost the championship. After the game "the boys were disappointed, of course, but there was no bitterness nor self or team condemnation. There was only great appreciation for the wonderful experience they had had together as friends and for the opportunity to represent their ward and stake in the tournament." The coach told them, "Men, we lost to a great team. You did

well." Hales summarized, "It was one of the greatest soul-lifting events that I have ever experienced to see such a victory come out of what others might call a depressing defeat." Hales praised "spiritualized recreation." Hill listed each position on the Jacksonville ward team and then where the young man was on a mission. He said at the first of the season, three had not been attending church and only two were considering missions. All the Mormons, however, ended up serving missions, and the nonmember was still attending meetings.[61]

Herman E. Funk wrote about the 1967 tournament in *Softball Illustrated,* a national softball magazine. In "96 Teams, 1000 . . . Mormons Invade Salt Lake City, [to] Battle for Church Softball Titles," he explained, "For magnitude, sportsmanship, good clean fun, and plenty of good softball, the annual five day tournament . . . is hard to beat." During the fast-pitch tournaments, games were scheduled every one and a half hours; for the slow-pitch tournament, games were scheduled every forty-five minutes starting at 7:30 a.m. Forty-eight games were played each day. Funk explained, "Typical of the spirit of sportsmanship of this tournament was the hospitality of the Rosedale [Salt Lake City] team which went beyond the call of duty." The San Diego, California, Tenth Ward stayed with Rosedale team members. The two teams played on Thursday, and San Diego won 8 to 2. But Funk reported the San Diego team "still had places to sleep the rest of the week."[62]

Stories

A 1971 article explained, "There were 1,780 players in this year's . . . tournament . . . and each one has a story." For example, Arlo Williams of Brigham City, Utah, lost four fingers on his right hand in an industrial accident. But he had developed a one-hand swing. Then there was Scott Hansen from Syracuse, Utah, who did not wash his socks while his high school baseball team had a winning streak. He continued that tradition to the all-church softball tournament. Another story was from the team from a university branch in Missoula, Montana, which decided

to come to the tournament and make up their school finals afterwards.[63] While it is interesting to talk about the general outline of the tournament, its greatest impact was on the individuals. The following stories highlight the effects church softball had on some players.

Mel Jones

Mel Jones grew up in Virden, New Mexico. His high school basketball team won the state championship in 1944. This was before there were classifications where small schools played other small schools, and yet his school of only thirty-five to forty high school students beat the larger schools. As Jones explained, "I had played with my compatriots there on the team ever since we were first and second graders. We were quite familiar with each other's abilities."

Immediately after high school Jones went into the service. While he was stationed on Okinawa, a group decided to play fast-pitch softball. Jones learned how to pitch by throwing to a catcher who was backed up by a hill. Jones remembered, "If I missed him–which I missed him plenty for the first while–the ball would hit on the hill and roll back." After being released from the service, Jones went to the Southern States Mission, where he helped organize a softball league and competed on a missionary team. After attending college, he moved to Mesa, Arizona, where he played city and church ball. At that time the age limit for M Men playing church ball was twenty-five, so he had one year left that he could play. That year the team went to Salt Lake City for the tournament and "we had fun."

Jones recalled the playoffs to get to the all-church tournament during the summer of 1952. To qualify, his team had to play three games in one night. They won the first game. Then they beat the next team, the one that had beat them on Thursday night, the day that Jones's wife delivered a baby during the game. And then Jones's team won the third game. When they went to the all-church tournament, they saw an exhibition game of slow pitch. He remembered, "We laughed" because the team thought slow pitch would not be popular. He added, "I was never

more wrong in my life."

Jones continued to promote church sports. In 1965 he won the Homer Pug Warner all-church athletic award for service to youth. Because he was so busy at work and as a bishop, he did not plan to go to Salt Lake City for June Conference. His stake president called and told Jones he needed to go to receive the award. Jones traveled all night, and the next day he sat on the stand at the Salt Lake Tabernacle. "[I was] just overwhelmed by it all."[64]

Lowell Budge

Lowell Budge grew up in Malad, Idaho. When he was fourteen, the bishop asked him to put together a softball team to go to a tournament in Brigham City. He got his brother and some of his friends together and created a team. With little understanding of softball, they lost that first year, but Budge came home after the tournament and taught himself how to pitch. The team went back the second year, took second, and got to all-church. That year they were eliminated by the team that had won the year before.

The Malad team eventually did well enough to get to the finals against the Salt Lake Thirtieth Ward. That game is etched forever in Budge's mind. After going extra innings on Thursday and Friday, Budge's team had to play the championship game on Saturday. Budge was pitching. "We were in the sixth inning 0-0. I had two outs, and nobody on the bases. He hit a ball down the first baseline. It was spinning in the sand. The first baseman ran over, grabbed the ball, ran back, and tagged the bag. He didn't have the ball in his hand. He thought he had it. From then on it was two inches here and there, but they just started scoring runs." Despite losing, Budge concluded, "It was a tremendous experience."

Budge's team played a Price, Utah, ward when church leaders dedicated the George Q. Morris Field. It was great to have the new complex so the teams did not have to play at fields all over the Salt Lake Valley. But it was a special honor to be chosen to play for the dedication.

Budge explained, "That was kind of odd. We beat them 6-0, the same thing we got beat by Salt Lake Thirtieth."

The Malad team rented a school bus to travel to all-church. Budge's father rode with the team and attended the game, but the father did not watch. He was so nervous he would hide in the grandstands and come out only to see the score. The year Malad took second place, Budge won most valuable player. But for him the highlight was "everyone except myself and [one other player] filled a mission." Some of the boys came from inactive families, but sports brought them into the Church. Even though he did not go on a mission, Budge continued going to church and later was a ward bishop. Although he saw the downside, especially the competitiveness, he sighed, "I thought it really inspired young people to stay close to the Church. It gave them something to work together to accomplish."

Although Budge played high school football, basketball, and baseball, the all-church softball title was more important to him. He explained, "We won the football championship in a state league when I was a senior in high school. We were probably the smallest team in the league and ended up winning the championship. I think being the most valuable player in all-church is probably the most exciting thing that ever happened to me in sports."[65]

Michael Mitchell

Michael Mitchell grew up near Derks Baseball Field in Salt Lake. His ward played all its games at the George Q. Morris Park, so he called it his home field. He was not a member of the LDS Church but did not consider that a problem. No one tried to convert him because he lived with his grandparents who did not like Mormons. Still he went to church twice a month as required to participate on the team. He did not explain why, but he said he played for other churches and preferred playing with the Mormons rather than the Baptists.

When his team went to all-church, the coach told them they needed to worry about the

second game and not the first. They played Centerfield, Utah, who had a top football player on the team. Mitchell, the shortstop, had a ball slip between his legs. The center fielder got it but threw to home rather than to Mitchell. Two runs scored, and Centerfield won 3 to 2. Mitchell's team won the consolation, and except for the error, he played very well. He received the most valuable player award. When Elder Ezra Taft Benson asked Mitchell why he was not a Mormon, Mitchell said no one had ever asked him. As a result, he talked to the missionaries, listened to their lessons, and was baptized in December. Mitchell said church sports were "a great experience. It turned my life around. Sports is a big tool I think to bring people into the Church."[66]

David Wilson

David Wilson grew up in poverty in Los Angeles, California. He remembered that his father met the missionaries and listened for awhile. But he decided not to join the church. Wilson was impressed though and decided to be baptized. He left home after a disagreement with his father.

Wilson did not make the school baseball team, so he decided to play church softball. He explained he was not very good, but coach George Busby worked with him. Wilson improved enough that he was able to play first base. In 1966 when he was eighteen, he could play junior or senior ball, but not both. The junior team was excellent. They were winning easily at regionals when the coach substituted new players into the game. The opposing team caught up and even when the coach put the regulars back in, the team lost. Wilson lamented, "We were a whole lot better than they were, and they ended up going to Salt Lake."

The senior team did qualify to go, but the first baseman broke his leg in a motorcycle accident. The coach then asked Wilson to play in the regional games. His Palmdale Ward played their arch rivals, Studio City, who knew he had already played junior ball. Studio City leaders let

the game go but when they lost, the leaders protested. Elder Nathan Eldon Tanner, an apostle, decided that Palmdale could go to all-church as the winner but Wilson could not play. Instead, he went as a third-base coach. The team got third place at the all-church tournament and won the sportsmanship trophy. The experience did not sour Wilson about the Church or its leaders. He even named a son Nathan after N. Eldon Tanner. "For some people the [experience] would have chased them off and ran them off the Church. It just strengthened me. The sports program was really super great to me. It helped keep me together."

After his ward was split, Wilson pitched against his former coach. "It was me against George pitching, and I beat him. He was the last batter up, and I struck him out. I must have jumped ten feet in the air. It was just really awesome. I considered George my hero, and I had struck him out and won the ball game. He wasn't very happy. If he only knew how I really felt about him, he would have been happy."

Wilson's coach, George Edward Busby, was awarded the Homer Warner Award at June Conference in 1968. His life was a remarkable story. Busby had polio when he was nine months old, which limited the use of his left arm, shoulder, and leg, When he was small, he fell out of a tree and broke his left arm so it never fully developed. Still he overcame all the hardships. When he was twelve, he played softball with the men because he was too fast for the boys. Busby participated in school and church athletics and won numerous trophies and ribbons. His teams won the all-church basketball tournament in 1944 and the all-church softball tournament in 1953, 1954 and 1964. But the years that mattered the most to Busby were 1953, 1956, and 1966 when his teams won the sportsmanship trophies. "Sportsmanship and all that goes with it–fairness, honesty, generosity, concern for others, wholesomeness, and a spirit of good cheer–have long been trademarks of Bishop Busby, " Wilson declared. Busby "was totally a hero." Although Busby never went on a mission Wilson said, "[Busby] was probably the greatest missionary I've

ever known. Because of the sports program, he brought in many people to the Church."[67]

Gerald Broadbent

Gerald Broadbent would agree that softball brought people into the Church. He grew up in Utah and played baseball and softball in the Salt Lake Valley. After serving in the Korean War, he moved to California where he played with the Vista First Ward softball team and served as ward athletic director and coach. The ward had space for a softball field, but it became an unpaved parking lot. Broadbent and another player groomed the field, changing the parking lot into a softball field each year. The ward's main competition was the Escondido First Ward. Broadbent's team could never beat them because they had a better pitcher. Eventually the Vista ward team moved to slow pitch.

In 1967 the junior and senior teams from Vista went to the regionals. The junior team lost by one run in the regional finals. The senior team played San Diego, California, Fifteen Ward, a team which had been to all-church for three years and won the all-church tournament the year before. Broadbent recalled finally beating that team: "We were behind in the seventh inning seven to five. It was the last time we were to bat. I got all the team together. We had our home run hitters in the middle of the batting order. . . . The pitcher on the other team was really not consistent in pitching strikes . . . so he walked a number of people. We figured we could beat them if we could get the bases loaded and have one of our men hit a home run. He walked our pitcher Lou Schmidt. Then Bob Swanson got a single. . . . Our third batter walked. We now had the bases loaded and our home run hitters coming up. . . . We had two outs. . . . Steve Jones . . . came to bat and hit a sky high fly ball. It went clear up out of the lights and the center fielder on the other team couldn't find it. In the mean time the guys were running because it was two outs. Eventually the ball came down and hit on the field behind the outfielder. By that time we'd scored three runs so we won the game. . . . We were jumping up and down all over the place with

joy."[68]

Getting to the all-church tournament was a problem. There were five married men who had to arrange time off from work. Broadbent remembered going to a fireside before the tournament started where Elder Marion D. Hanks said, "Today you're all champions. Tomorrow some of you won't be." But he went on to explain that winning was not everything. Softball had other purposes. Men who had not previously attended church meetings became active because of softball and nonmembers also took part. They may not join but they "got acquainted."

Broadbent's team beat Minnesota Eighth Ward, but then he had to return to work in California. The team lost the second game. Still "it was a great thing for us, because we were a little, small dinky town, and only a few of us Mormons in that whole area. We got this opportunity to come to Salt Lake and play in this big, huge tournament. The guys were real tickled." The local newspaper wrote up the story. At a dinner honoring the team, the mayor declared it "LDS Church Softball Day." Later, Broadbent stopped attending church. A bishop asked him to do softball again, so he returned. He had missed going to church and appreciated the chance to come back through softball.[69]

Eloise Godfrey Fugal–A Woman's Story

Women who played sports never participated in all-church tournaments, but they did go to regionals. According to the YWMIA sports and camp manuals, intra-regional sports were allowed when stakes were close and the teams could easily get to a central location for a tournament. Stakes had to sponsor their own tournaments and select a winner that could go to the intra-regional contest. A regional supervisor made the arrangements, and all the stake presidents and YWMIA leaders had to support the activity. The manual suggested that after the tournament that the region sponsor a social for the winners to get to know each other.[70]

Regional tournaments were as exciting for women as the all-church tournament was for

the men. One excellent example is a women's softball team in Cornish, Utah, that Eloise Godfrey Fugal described in an oral history interview. Fugal, a graduate of Sky View High School in 1969, took part as a student and later as a coach with the ward team.

Cornish, Utah, a small town (population averaged between100-200) on the Utah-Idaho border, had a great community baseball team around the middle of the twentieth century. Everyone went to the games and played unique roles there. Many felt baseball put Cornish on the map because the team always competed for the league championship and often won over much larger communities. The community baseball league finally folded in 1966, but according to Eloise Godfrey, that sport was replaced by women's church softball. Just as everyone came to see the town baseball team, they came out to her softball games.

Fans took on new roles. Godfrey recalled, "I think we had an interesting fan in the grandmother of one of the girls who came to every game. We tried to be really good sports. She sometimes would embarrass us with the things that she said." And her comments were frequently directed at the players. This woman was "quite free with her advise. . . . If you fouled up, one of the worst things was knowing she was going to be on your case. I think we all didn't want to make mistakes because she had a pretty good way of expressing herself, shall we say."

Softball also strengthened community bonds between the girls. Godfrey recalled a non-Mormon who played softball because of its popularity in Cornish. The young woman eventually joined the Church, although Godfrey was not sure what role church sports played in that conversion. As the coach one year just after she was eligible to play, Godfrey recalled a girl who was not a softball player. They needed her to play. Godfrey recalled: "By her choice she played right field where the ball never comes. I don't know if it was the last game of the season. It probably really wasn't. My mind probably just made that up to make it more dramatic. In one of the last games of the season and it was against Lewiston Fourth Ward. They were still one of

the teams to beat. She accidentally caught a fly ball. It came right to her. It landed right in her mitt. There was not a thing she could do about it, and it just was there. She was carried off the field like an Olympic hero. It was a wonderful, magic moment."[71]

Summary

Softball was the second largest all-church tournament. While basketball was more popular in Utah and then later throughout the United States, softball was the preferred sport in warmer areas like Arizona and California. Overseeing softball was a "priesthood responsibility." Church leaders such as Elders Joseph Fielding Smith and Delbert L. Stapley wrote frequent letters to encourage all wards to participate in softball. They emphasized that winning should not be the goal. Instead the ward and stake leaders should provide an opportunity for everyone who wanted–members and nonmembers–to play. The end goal was not coming to Salt Lake City to play in the all-church tournament. The desired goal was to change lives, to convert men and boys to LDS principles, and through them to bring their families into the LDS Church.

Like the rest of the United States, the Mormon softball program started out emphasizing fast pitch. Since that game often became a duel between the pitcher and the batter, some felt that the other players were not involved. Over time, like other Americans, the Mormon program shifted to include slow pitch. At first some fast-pitch players disliked slow pitch; many considered it a "sissy" game. But by the time the program ended in 1972, more slow pitch than fast-pitch teams came to the tournament.

Basketball and softball were the major tournaments, but the LDS Church also sponsored other sports. The next chapter deals with other all-church activities.

1. L. E. Rytting, "Play Ball," *Improvement Era* (August 1961):589.

2. Loren Walsh, *Inside Baseball* (Chicago: Regnery, 1977), vii.

3. Ibid., vii-x.

4. John D. Giles and Helena W. Larson, "The M Men-Gleaner Silver Jubilee," *Improvement Era*, (March 1947):181.

5. The *Provo Herald* included reports of the elders quorum league during the 1930s.

6. Rytting, 589; 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), 17-20.

7. *Deseret News*, August 23, 1949, B2; August 28, 1949, C2; September 11, 1949, 3C; September 15, 1949, B5; September 25, 1949, 10C

8. *Improvement Era*, 57 (April 1954), 218, 252.

9. Joseph Fielding Smith to all stake presidents, March 10, 1961, Church softball committee circular letters, CR 68/3, Church History Library, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Hereinafter cited as Church History Library.)

10.Oborn, 23-30.

11.Ibid., 33-35.

12. *Deseret News*, August 23, 1949, B2; August 28, 1949, C2.

13. D. Mark Hutchings Oral History, interviewed by Erin Hutchings, 2003, Provo, Utah, 11-16, 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.).

14. Ibid., 48-49.

15. Ibid., 50-57.

16. Archie and Shirlee Darley, Oral History, interviewed by Jessie Embry, 2003, Wellsville, Utah, 3.

17. Oborn, 57-58.

18. Ibid., 60-65; Darley, 6.

19. Stringam A. Stevens, "George Quayle Morris: The New Superintendent of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association." *Improvement Era*, 1937, gospellink.com; "George Q. Morris of the Council of Twelve," *Improvement Era*, 1954, gospellinks.com. Retrieved on December 5, 2007.

20. Oborn, 66.

21. Monitor Noyes, "Athletics and Sports," *Improvement Era* (September 1964), 760.

22. Osborn, 66; *Deseret News*, June 9, 1956, June 11, 1956, June 13, 1956.

23. Oborn, 70-80.

24. Ibid., 81-82.

25. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Church History Library. Used by permission.

26. Noyes, 760.

27. *Church News*, August 17, 1968, 15.

28. Ibid., August 8, 1970, 10; August 22, 1970, A7; *Improvement Era* (October 1959), 41; (October 1961), 742; (August 1962), 776; (November 1963), 914; (October 1964), 856; (November 1965), 250; (October1967), 21; (October 1968), 851; (November 1967), 74-75; (October 1969), 79; (October 1970), 34; (November 1970), 113.

29. *Deseret News*, August 13, 1971, 2D.

30. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972. Used by permission.

31. Wendell Eyring Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Mesa, Arizona, 5-6.

32. Hutchings, 15.

33. *Church News*, August 17, 1968, 15; August 14, 1971, 5.

34. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972. Used by permission.

35. Ibid.

36. Hutchings, 16.

37. Clark N. Stohl to Ezra Taft Benson, August 8, 1960, Church softball committee circular letters, Church Record, 68/3, Church History Library.

38. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972. Used by permission.

39. *Deseret News*, August 19, 1957, 2B.

40. Effie Gunderson Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 6; Mel Jones Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Mesa, Arizona, 8.

41. Gunderson, 9.

42. Bob Anderson Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Mesa, Arizona, 5.

43. Hutchings, 17-18.

44. Judy Donaldson Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 8.

45. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972. Used by permission.

46. *Deseret News*, August 20, 1957, 4B.

47. After reading about the Redd Center research project, Larry Brewer, who lives in Mesa, sent copies of newspaper articles from the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret News*. The quoted articles are *Deseret News*, August 24, 1959, 2B and August 25, 1966, 6B.

48. Gunderson, 1.

49. Claudia Shelton Oral History, interviewed by Jessie Embry, 2006, West Valley City, Utah, 1.

50. Eldon D. Brinley, "The Contributions of Mormon Recreation," *Improvement Era* (July 1945):394.

51.Joseph Fielding Smith to all stake presidents, February 28, 1964, March 8, 1965, Church softball committee circular letters, Church Records 68/3, Church History Library.

52.David Smart Oral History, interviewed by Valerie Davis, 2004, Provo, Utah, 6.

53. *Church News*, August 29, 1951, 10.

54. *Deseret News*, Augst 21, 1951, A7; *Church News*, September 11, 1949, 10C; September 10, 1949, 10C; August 22, 1951, 6; *Deseret News*, August 26, 1951, 2C; *Church News*, August 29,

1951, 10.

55. *Deseret News*, August 23, 1949, B2; August 28, 1949, C2.

56. Joseph Fielding Smith to all stake presidents, February 28, 1964, March 8, 1965, Church softball committee circular letters, Church Records 68/3, Church History Library.

57. Delbert L. Stapley to all stake presidents, March 22, 1967, Church softball committee circular letters, Church Record 68/3, Church History Library.

58. Ibid.

59. *Deseret News*, August 21, 1951, A7; *Church News*, August 22, 1951, 6; *Deseret News*, August 26, 1951, 2C; *Church News*, August 29, 1951, 10.

60. *Church News*, August 28, 1954, 6-7; September 4, 1954, 4.

61.YMMIA Athletic Committee, 1942-1972. Used by permission.

62. Ibid.

63.*Church News*, August 21, 1971, 10.

64. Mel Jones Oral History, interviewed by Michael Q. Cannon, 2003, Mesa, Arizona.

65. Lowell Budge Oral History, interviewed by Jessie Embry, 2003, Smithfield, Utah.

66. Michael Mitchell Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, 3, 9.

67. David Wilson Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003; Jay M. Todd, "The Strong Arm of Courage," *Improvement Era* (November 1968):25-26.

68. Gerald Broadbent Oral History, interview by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1-16..

69. Ibid.

70. YWMIA, *Sports and Camp Manual, 1973-1974* (Salt Lake City: YWMIA, 1973). The manuals changed very little over the years so this statement was repeated each year.

71. Eloise Godfrey Fugal Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Lindon, Utah, 1-17.

Chapter 5
Other Sports and Recreation

"The volleyball season climaxes with a championship flourish. . . . Occasion is the 1967 All-Church Volleyball tournament. The rapidly-rising sport is expected to lure some of the top teams in the United States. Last year's finalists, Oakland 4th and Lanakila, Hawaii, have played and beaten some of the nation's better volleyball squads."[1]

Hartt Wixom, *Deseret News*

"As we reflect back on the all-church [tennis] tournament, it's one of the memories that we treasure. It's not very often you get to say, 'We won the all-church tournament' in anything even if it was a tennis tournament that didn't last very long. It's one of those that we think back on quite often."[2]

J. L. Thornton, Oral History

"I am most grateful for the athletic program of the Church and the great opportunity it affords the youth. Since becoming a member of the Church, I have understood why we are here to develop our talents."[3]

Billy Casper, Pro Golfer, *Improvement Era*

"With another general conference history, the eyes of the Church now turn toward the MIA. June Conference, the fifty-second, to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, June, 15, 16, and 17, 1951. There is eagerness in the hearts of thousands of young folk as they look forward to participating in one of the great annual festivals of this organization–festivals which come as the culmination of the year's learning and doing."[4]

LaRue C. Longden, *Improvement Era*

"Plans are being made to have relay competition in 1952 more spirited and wide-spread than in 1951."[5]

YMMIA Athletic Manual, 1952-53

Basketball and softball were the largest all-church athletic programs. They attracted the most teams and participants. But these sports were not the only Mormon athletic activities. Other all-church tournaments included volleyball, tennis, golf, and relays. One interviewee even remembered a horseshoe tournament.[6] While not competitive, another large all-church function was the dance festival at June Conference. This chapter examines these other MIA sports and recreation activities. Following the pattern set in the basketball and softball chapters, there is a brief history of each sport or activity to give a larger context, a history of the LDS Church experience, and then personal examples. For all these activities, church leaders' goals were to help young people improve all aspects of their lives.

Volleyball

Church leaders kept careful records of the teams that registered from each region in three major sports: basketball, softball, and volleyball. Their goal was for all wards and stakes to participate. In 1957 the athletic committee compiled a list of registered teams that showed basketball and softball dominated from 1955 to 1957. Volleyball was a distant third. While the leaders called it an all-church tournament, most of the teams came from Utah and Idaho.[7]

Volleyball History

In 1895, Massachusetts YMCA employee William G. Morgan wanted a businessmen's game for non-basketball players. He created a game he called mintonette, which used a net and a ball and required very little equipment. A year later Professor Alfred T. Halstead at the School for Christian Workers changed the name because the men "volleyed" the ball. Morgan's game resembled faust, an Italian game from the middle ages introduced in Germany in 1893, and minton, a game brought to the United States in 1895. But Morgan claimed there was no connection. He invented the game.[8]

Within a few years the game spread. The YMCA sent the first published rules to all its athletic directors in 1897. Ten years later the Playground Association of America conference (now the National Recreation Association) introduced the game. The rules evolved. Morgan started with no limit to the number of players per side. Like baseball, the games had nine innings where the teams played for nine periods, and like basketball, players could "dribble" the ball. In 1912 new rules specified six players per side and rotating servers. The American Sports Publishing Company produced the first book on volleyball with new rules on touches, points, and net height in 1916.[9]

The game spread internationally. By 1917 the YMCA had introduced the sport in Canada, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Brazil. Between July 1918 and July 1919 the YMCA distributed fifteen thousand volleyballs to American troops and allies throughout the world. Soldiers liked the game and continued to play after the war. Twenty-seven teams from eleven states participated in a YMCA national tournament in 1922, and the Pittsburgh Downtown YMCA won. Seven years later 821 leagues (including over 7,000 teams) competed.

The Amateur Athletic Union (1925) and the United States Volleyball Association (1928) regulated rules. In 1937 the two organizations combined. The AAU turned its responsibility over to the USVBA, which also became a charter member of the International Volleyball Federation. By 1956, sixty million people played the game and twenty-five countries considered it their main sport. Volleyball became an official Olympic sport in 1964.

In 1916 the YMCA invited the NCAA to edit rules and promote the game. During the 1920s American universities taught classes and formed intramural programs. USVBA held its first men's and women's college championship tournament in 1949. In 1952 the NCAA agreed to hold a national championship if eight schools had teams with varsity status. While more than fifty schools responded, only six had variety teams. The NCAA did not sponsor its first tournament until 1970. The LDS Church College of Hawaii won the first National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics championship in 1967.[10]

Volleyball, Mormons, and Hawaii

It was not surprising that Mormons from Hawaii won the first tournament. The sport and the Church had been popular there for years. Mormon missionaries introduced volleyball to the Big Island of Hawaii in 1917. Members played at the church's Hui Opio meetings, a youth organization. In 1921, Mormons formed the first men's volleyball league in Hawaii, and in 1924 they organized the first women's league. Volleyball tournaments included celebrations before the games and potlucks afterward. In 1958 the Big Island teams traveled to other islands and competed against other Mormons. Two years later a Hawaii Mission Youth Conference with members from all the Hawaiian Islands except Oahu included volleyball as an activity.[11]

From the Mormon beginning in 1917, volleyball spread to businesses, schools, and city recreation. Many Big Island plantations sponsored worker leagues. Volleyball was also important

in the high schools and the LDS Church on the islands during the 1930s. World War II stopped most organized tournaments, but Hawaiians resumed playing after the war. By 1946 all plantation sports ended, but community parks and recreation participation in volleyball doubled. LDS congregations entered teams in these leagues.[12]

Boy Scouts of America and Vanball/Volleyball

The first Mormon involvement with volleyball on the mainland was in a scouting program that the LDS Church developed for older boys ages fifteen and sixteen. The Salt Lake Council of the Boy Scouts of American held its first annual Older Scout Conference in 1924, and four years later it became the Church's Vanguard program. The early Mormon group played a game that they called "vanball," a modified form of volleyball that combined basketball and volleyball. A 1931 article in the *Improvement Era* explained vanball was based on volleyball, the major sport of the YMCA, and combined elements of tennis, basketball, soccer, and other sports. "From a standpoint of balanced physical development and the opportunity to develop skill, grace, and agility" it was an important sport.[13]

The Boy Scouts developed a vanball league in 1931. At the fifth annual tournament in 1936 the Logan, Utah Fifth and Ninth wards played in the finals. They were co-champions the year before, and they were evenly matched again. When it looked like the match would never end, the officials set a time limit; the match had to be over at midnight. At that time Logan Fifth Ward was ahead and was declared the winner. The church magazine explained that the losers were tired because they had other close matches. But despite this "handicap," the magazine declared, "Logan 9th was as magnificent in defeat as were the champions in victory." The winning team received sweaters, and all participants got a ribbon.[14]

The game caught on slowly, so in 1936 church leaders sponsored vanball clinics in Ephraim, Provo, Cedar City, Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Richmond, Utah, along with Burley, Montpelier, and Rexburg, Idaho. "Demonstrations of serving, passing, set-up, and attack plays, and team work followed a discussion of the purposes and objectives of the General Board of YMMIA in creating and promoting this new game, especially for older boys." The clinics also advertised the tournament in January 1937 at which "special features will be added to the tournament to increase further interest in the Explorer program."[15]

The LDS Church and the Boy Scouts vanball tournaments were closely connected. For the seventh annual Region 11 and 12 vanball championship in 1938, the YMMIA helped with planning and allowed the boys to use the Deseret Gymnasium for the semifinal and final rounds. The Scouts used the gym in 1935, but from 1935 to 1938 the tournament was held in other facilities. Church leaders explained that starting in 1938, "The Explorer finals will be given the same consideration as M Men basketball."[16] The Mormon magazine estimated one thousand Explorers competed in the Salt Lake area and four thousand played church wide.[17]

The same cooperation continued in 1939. Explorer leaders reported, "Participation in the official competition Athletic Sport for Explorers has been much greater than ever before. With keener competition and wider representation, this year's tournament promises to be the best one ever conducted." YMMIA leaders planned activities for the championship game (but did not explain what they were except they would involve the Junior girls). This 1939 event was the first meet with professional officials and box scores.[18]

In 1941 Logan Ninth won for the second year in a row "by playing as fine a brand of vanball as has ever been played by Explorers. The smoothness and accuracy displayed was indicative of long consistent training under competent leaders." Emigrant Ward from Salt Lake Council won second and "surprised even themselves by playing a championship brand of ball from the beginning of the game until the end." Logan Ninth won 15 to 13 and 16 to 4. The rest of the top eight were:

3rd Logan Fifth Ward

4th Manchester Ward, Los Angeles

5th Salt Lake Thirty-third Ward.

6th Pocatello Fifth Ward

7th Fairview, Utah Ward

8th Ogden Ward.

Logan Ninth players received Explorer sweaters and second place Emigration and consolation winner Salt Lake Thirty-third ward teams got vanballs. The church magazine explained, "The tournament was characterized by a much finer type of vanball playing than in previous years. On practically every team was one or more outstanding server, kill-shot, or set-up artist." Although everyone was good, the tournament organizers selected an all-tournament team. The tournament was

a success because "hundreds of Explorers throughout the Church today have an athletic program they can proudly call their own."[19]

Scouts and YMMIA leaders held the tournament again in 1942, but the April issue of The *Improvement Era* announced a cutback in Explorer sports during the war. The article stressed the need for some social activities and maybe even more athletics to "build morale." Yet, the author continued, "There is not time for more play than is absolutely necessary. War time is work time and Explorers have plenty of work to do."[20]

All-Church Tournament

Scouting did not return to vanball after World War II. By 1950, church members started playing volleyball and held the first all-church tournament. Why? While none of the records discussed why vanball disappeared, the best guess is that it had not ever caught on as a sport. However, volleyball was becoming very popular and had similar elements. So rather than returning to an unknown sport that had ended because of the war, the YMMIA leaders introduced a new popular sport. A June Conference report explained that many wards had started teams which spoke "well for the future of this sport."[21] The athletic department expounded, "This interesting sport is taking hold in excellent shape and can be used as an excellent ward activity."[22]

Since the all-church tournament for volleyball as opposed to the Boy Scout vanball tournament was so new, the 1952-53 *YMMIA Athletic Handbook* included a term glossary and rules for volleyball. The 1958-59 handbook encouraged more participation. The author explained that senior volleyball was "a very fine activity for old and young (nineteen and up) that can be used to bridge the gap between the basketball and softball seasons." The game worked well indoors or outdoors.[23]

With fewer teams, the all-church tournament only lasted for three days. There were junior and senior divisions, but only sixteen teams competed on the senior level in 1969. Still, there was a devotional, a banquet, an opening ceremony, and the excitement that surrounded basketball and softball. YMMIA Athletic Secretary Judy Donaldson remembered the devotionals and named YMMIA leaders and General Authorities who spoke. While she did not remember their talks, she assumed they talked on "being your best and the sportsmanship angle. It was being examples and bringing the gospel into that context." Donaldson continued, "It started the tournament off on the

right foot." She also recalled the banquet, "Just prior to the volleyball tournaments starting, they would have a banquet. They did that for a number of years. I guess that got too expensive, and it kind of died out. One year they had it at one of the hotels. Another time I think they had it at the Hotel Utah in one of the banquet rooms. Volleyball wasn't such a large group. [Only] the coaches and the team members would come."[24]

To help cover expenses and to register participants, each team paid first a two-dollar and then a three-dollar annual fee. The money was used to pay for the banquet, rent facilities, pay officials' fees, buy equipment, prepare a program, and purchase trophies. Each year the committee reported a profit between $1,000 and $3,000. Unlike the basketball program, the YMMIA athletic committee did not provide housing for volleyball players who competed in the all-church tournaments. Donaldson explained, "I don't know why. I guess we blew it all on basketball." Senior and junior teams competed in the Deseret Gym, in other church buildings, or in public schools.[25]

Church participation grew over the years. In 1954 there were 17 divisions and 447 senior teams that competed. Two years later in 1956, 615 senior and 515 junior teams played. During the rest of the 1950s and the early 1960s the number of teams competing on both levels was between four hundred and five hundred. In 1965, that number grew to 869 junior teams and 735 senior in 24 divisions. Then the numbers of divisions and teams increased. In 1966 there were over nine hundred teams in both junior and senior categories. The next four years there were over one thousand teams in thirty-nine divisions. The number of teams in each division changed each year, but the Utah divisions that played basketball and softball had the largest numbers of teams.[26]

In the early 1960s teams from BYU wards won the senior division. But starting in 1965 the Oakland Fourth Ward, a team of Polynesians, became the champion and kept the title for five years. In 1967 the Oakland Fourth Ward defeated a Hawaiian team for the senior championship, and a Kahuwai team of Hawaii won the junior championship. Judy Donaldson especially remembered the Oakland and Hawaii championship game. "It almost blew the roof off that place with just the noise and the enthusiasm."[27] The Kahuwai junior team also won the all-church tournament in 1969. In 1970 the Church College of Hawaii beat the Polynesian Ward of San Francisco.[28]

Oakland Fourth Ward

The Redd Center collected fewer stories about volleyball than it did basketball and softball.

It was not the initial focus, and there were not as many responses. A member of the bishopric told the story of the dominant Oakland Fourth Ward. Henry Whiffen grew up in that city. Because of his troubled home life, the state eventually put him in foster care. But the Church was an anchor in his life. When he was only twenty-seven years old, he became a counselor to the bishop in his childhood ward. Many Hawaiians moved into the area, and Whiffen "was assigned to work with them." This experience led to mutual respect and friendship. However, there were some divisions. Whiffen recalled, "Some were Japanese Hawaiian, some were Chinese Hawaiian, some were Filipino Hawaiians." As the group looked for similar interests, they talked about playing volleyball on the islands. So Whiffen introduced them to church athletics, and they formed a team.

The team brought the group together as friends and increased their spirituality. Team members invited friends to play, and some of those joined the Church. At the same time, the team also won. The first year the Oakland team won every game and every match. Their toughest opponent was a team from San Francisco that always went to the "regional and to the area championship. They had gone to Salt Lake to the all-church several times." But the Oakland team "blew away San Francisco."

When the Oakland team went to all-church in 1965, they were the unknown dark horse. Initially everyone had expected a previous championship team from BYU to win the tournament. When the Oakland team started to warm up, Whiffen recalled, "They were spiking the ball, and it was hitting the ground and then going up and hitting the wall behind the bleachers. Most people had not really seen power volleyball of this caliber." As a result, spectators started to watch the Oakland team warm up and play games. The Oakland ward dominated the tournament. But it had to go three games against a team from Ohio because Oakland team members had worn themselves out the afternoon before the game playing in a pool. [29]

The "aloha" spirit of the Oakland and other Polynesian teams added to the excitement of the tournament. Ray Hale, who was on the volleyball committee for twelve years, remembered that the Hawaii and Oakland teams "brought a lot of color [excitement] to the church tournaments. They showed us locally how to play good volleyball."[30] At the opening ceremonies before the Hawaii and Oakland game, the Oakland team brought pineapples; the Laie, Hawaii, team provided leis.[31] The two teams fought hard during the match, but their competitiveness did not carry over after the game.

Team members joined in impromptu singing at the banquet.[32] They also sang after the championship game. The announcer explained that the Hawaii team had earned money to come to the tournament by singing and invited them to sing for spectators. "They came out and began to sing. They motioned for the Oakland team to come and join them. Then their wives on the other side of the court started singing." A participant from another team Ray Oaks summarized, "These moments I think are what sports were about. You really felt the spirit there."[33]

Dale Christensen, who grew up in Blackfoot, Idaho, recalled the Oakland Fourth Ward as "Polynesians [who] knew how to play volleyball." Although they were "a foot shorter than we were, they could jump higher. . . . They could spike and retrieve the ball. . . . We were just amazed how good of volleyball players they were. They taught us so much in just the games we watched them play." Judy Donaldson joked that the team won so often that she just wondered "why don't we hand [the trophy] to them" at the beginning.[34]

The Oakland Fourth Ward wanted better competition and offered to give clinics. Whiffen recalled, "Our team got out the word that they'd be happy" to teach others how to play. On weekends the Oakland team traveled throughout California teaching volleyball skills to Mormon wards. The team developed a routine to demonstrate how to position players, rotate, set, and jump. Wherever the Oakland team gave a clinic, they also challenged an all-star group from the area. Oakland always won. In fact, Whiffen added that the games were "not close. This was an incredible team." The Oakland players stayed with the local members as they traveled around, and it provided an opportunity to meet wonderful people.[35]

The team not only brought good volleyball to the Church. It also provided a sense of community and spirituality to team members. Henry Whiffen looked at a team picture with Elder Thomas S. Monson and Marvin J. Ashton and then commented on each player. Earl Shem was "totally inactive" in the Church when he started playing volleyball, but "he became active and was ordained an elder." Peter Pua "was semi-active," and although "he never really got very activated," he attended church enough to meet the requirements to play. Freddy Hiapo was "a nonmember at this time." He took the missionary lessons, his wife took the lessons separately, and they both joined. "He has since been a bishop." Whiffen continued with each player and concluded, "It was a fabulous bunch of guys. We became very close. . . . It was thrilling to watch the spiritual growth of these

men." An article reported, "The team was composed mainly of non-members and Aaronic priesthood adults. They all progressed in the Church until there were two investigators, six elders, and one high priest."[36]

Besides creating a team community, volleyball created a ward community. When asked how the Oakland Fourth Ward members felt about the team, Whiffen explained, "They were so proud. At first they couldn't understand the idea of a volleyball team. They couldn't understand what's the big deal. Volleyball was a sissy thing" to the European Americans. But after a few people came to the games, these fans convinced others to come because it was exciting. "The ward became extremely supportive" and the team "bridged the gap" between the Polynesians and whites. Before volleyball the Polynesians were "clannish because that was comfortable." But volleyball gave whites a chance to meet the players and learn their names. "They became more and more friendly and really took them in. They were very warmly received by the ward and stake."[37] Nearly all the team members were Polynesians.. Whiffen was an exception when he played.

Other Teams

Gradually other teams learned to play. Richard Ball said that his Stratford Ward in Salt Lake City enjoyed basketball, but they did not know how to play volleyball. He put together a team that went to the all-church tournament where "we got beat badly." The players asked for help, so he had them practice. "For two or three weeks we worked on nothing but bumping the ball." When they asked when they could play, Ball told them they had to know how to "handle the ball." He had the team play in county recreational programs even though there were much better players. At the all-church tournament, they beat a California team with more experience. But winning at volleyball was not the main goal. Ball explained, "Today some of those boys from our group have become stake presidents and bishops and different leaders. These are young men that just make you beam when you see them. I had one of the young men who was in the quorum of the seventies," a General Authority.[38]

Those who played sports in the Holladay area in Salt Lake County learned integrity from their coaches. Kenneth Erickson played fast pitch softball in the all-church tournament in 1952 and volleyball in 1959 or 1960. Later, he coached the Holladay Sixteenth Ward in the all-church tournament play. His team competed against a Pleasanton, California, team, and Erickson recalled

a play that showed the character of his players. “I always told our guys to call themselves if they were in the net or touched the ball whether the refs saw it or not.” The match was in the third game; each team had won one. The score was 14 to 13 in the final game. The other team “hit a ball and it went out [of bounds], but our player called a touch on himself.” Had he not confessed, “that would have given us the match, and we would have advanced to play in the semi-finals.” The match continued, and Holladay lost. Erickson added, “But we didn’t lose because he called himself. We lost because they were the better team.”[39]

Participants in church athletics also learned about friendly competiton. For example, David Olson lived in the Orem, Utah, First Ward and took part in softball, volleyball, and basketball. The volleyball team did the best according to Olson because the BYU men’s volleyball coach lived in the ward and coached the team. When the ward was divided, the new ward, the Orem Twenty-fourth Ward, became the main rival. “We were still friends, but now we were competing against them.” After playing all the teams in the stake, the winners went to region and then to zone. “After that we went to all-church. That was the goal.”[40]

Tennis and Golf

In 1950 Church leaders added tennis and golf as all-church tournaments and talked about including table tennis (although that never happened).[41] These were the first nonteam sports, so the program differed from the stake, division, and zone play. Tennis and golf were becoming increasing popular in the United States during 1950s and continued to be promoted as lifetime sports in the 1960s.

History

Tennis and golf started as elite sports. Until the twentieth century, the wealthy and the working class carried on very separate lives. For example, in the nineteenth century, factory owners had leisure time; the workers struggled to survive. The rich men spent their free hours together first at gentlemen clubs; then as recreation expanded, they formed athletic clubs.

Over time these combined. In 1879 a Boston country club, the first in the United States, featured tennis courts, baseball space, and a club house. The idea caught on quickly; by 1901 there were a thousand clubs across the nation. Most were in the East, but every state had at least one. Country clubs featured games that required equipment and space: tennis, golf, yachting, and

horsemanship.[42]

Some form of tennis dated to the Roman Empire. The rules evolved, and the current game came from Wales court tennis. In 1872, Major Walter Clopton Wingfield invented lawn tennis as an outdoor athletic game for men and women. Mary Outerbridge brought the game to New York the next year. Women especially enjoyed it because they could play in Victorian dress.[43]

Tennis became less popular as the elite discovered golf. Robert Lockhard brought the Scottish game to Yonkers, New York, in 1888. At first he played with his friends in an orchard. Later they used a field and established St. Andrews, the United States' first golf course. By 1900 there were a thousand golf courses in the United States.[44]

At first tennis courts and golf courses did not mix. But clubs learned that combining sports provided more options and attracted more members. These new facilities shifted the focus from golf back to tennis, and tennis regained popularity from 1890 to 1920.[45]

But golf and tennis did not remain only for the wealthy. Frederick Olmstead, the father of the American park, included tennis in his Boston park in the 1880s. He argued that the area provided a place to play, and when not in use, it was "pastoral scenery." Many cities created public golf courses in the 1920s because more Americans wanted to play and could pay. The profits from golf funded other public athletic venues.[46]

The 1930s Depression leveled the playing field. The wealthy needed money to operate their clubs, so they invited more members to join. However, World War II slowed their growth. After the war, Americans had higher incomes and more free time, so the middle-class began adopting the country club lifestyle. Clubs improved and upgraded their tennis courts and golf courses for the new clientele.[47]

As interest in golf and tennis grew, many Americans demanded public facilities. A 1946 study claimed that tennis was the number one city-sponsored sport. Golf was close behind. Four million Americans played golf in 1948, and the number of golfers rose to eight million in 1966. Likewise, tennis participation increased 300 percent from 1970 to 1975. With the growing popularity, national tennis and golf organizations called for more and better places to play. In 1975 the United States Tennis Association Facilities Committee recommended that a city of fifteen hundred provide twenty courts and a city with one and a half million residents should have three

thousand courts.[48] In 1967 the National Golf Foundation complained that only 13 percent of courses were municipal while 47 percent were private and 30 percent were semi-private. The pamphlet listed the virtues of a public course as a community asset, a place for outdoor civic events, an open space, a place for city youth programs and school play, and a social center for women. In addition, it increased property values for the surrounding area and provided employment.[49]

Historian Richard J. Moss explained in *Golf and the American Country Club*,

> It is better to play a sport than to watch one.
>
> Leisure should bring families together, not drive them apart.
>
> Sports should be nonviolent, not thinly disguised substitutes for combat.
>
> Sports should teach self-control, honesty, and civility.
>
> Sports should help people retain a sense of place.
>
> Individuals acting together may create and control their own lives.[50]

The Mormon Tournaments

Tennis

Mormons recognized the virtues Moss described in tennis and golf. But in the late nineteenth century Mormons did not always play these games. Tennis, for example, remained a game for the wealthy until the twentieth century. No one is sure whether military personnel at Fort Douglas, immigrants from the East, or M. H. Walker, a rich Salt Lake resident, brought the game to Utah. Walker hosted the first tournament in 1885 on the Walker Block between Main Street and West Temple and Fourth and Fifth South. The *Salt Lake Herald* reported that tennis "has already taken a firm hold upon large numbers of our society people." Ogden and Provo residents also enjoyed the game. BYU built tennis courts in 1912 and leading citizens such as T. N. Taylor had private courts. Tennis became a popular college sport in the 1920s.

In 1911 the Mormon-owned Deseret Gymnasium trained ward coaches for four weeks in "basketball, baseball, volleyball and tennis."[51] The M Men tried a tennis tournament in the 1920s, but the game was not popular and few participated. As a result, the Church dropped the program.[52]

Following World War II, more Mormons, like other Americans generally, started to play tennis, and the sport joined the all-church tournament roster. In 1950 and 1951 players competed in singles and doubles. Men over seventeen years old were eligible and paid a two-dollar registration

fee for stake play. After winning on a stake level, the players went on to compete in division and all-church tournaments. There were not always many competitors, so tennis did not have an upper age limit. Divisions sometimes combined for a tournament. For example, Divisions 9 and 14 in the Salt Lake Valley held "a double duty" meet in 1951.[53] That year Marvin J. Ashton and his wife won the all-church mixed doubles; then he and a male tennis partner, won the all-church tournament men's doubles title. In 1971 when Ashton became a member of the Quorum of Twelve, he explained, "I started playing tennis when I was about 12 years old, and I have been playing ever since."[54]

Over the years the tournament changed as tennis became more popular. The 1964 tournament included new divisions–mixed family doubles, father-son doubles, and singles in A, B, and non-rated. Tournament leaders awarded thirty-three trophies. The newspaper praised the winners, calling Glen Haynes, "one of the state's best" and claiming "a more deserving champion would be hard to find."[55] Unlike the team sports, excellent players were not eliminated; they competed in a skilled division.

In 1969 three hundred players from "Hawaii to Great Britain" played for fifty trophies in thirty-four divisions. The four-day tournament was held at Salt Lake City's Liberty Park. That year the YWMIA also sponsored a separate meet for girls and women. In 1970 about the same number of players participated. Patrick Landau, a member of the BYU Forty-sixth Ward, a recent convert, and a former member of a Davis Cup team, won first place in the ranked singles. Richard L. Warner, the president of a University of Utah stake, and his son Rick won the men's doubles for the second year.[56]

YMMIA Athletic Committee secretary Judy Donaldson recalled, "I didn't do a whole lot with the tennis tournament. They were mostly held at Liberty Park. At least I didn't go to any of them. There wasn't that much to do on my part. Of course they had to get the referees, the lineman, arrange for the facilities, and get the information out to the zone supervisors, so people could know about it. They had to get their entry forms in and get their pairings, singles or doubles. That wasn't held for too many years before everything changed."[57] Donaldson's oral history does not explain why things changed nor do other records. One speculation is that the YMMIA focused on the advantages of team sports. They encouraged the young men to learn to play together and to develop a community. It was also easier to determine who came to the all-church tournament for team sports

because of the playoff system. Eligibility was more difficult to detremine for individual sports.

J. L. and Mary Thornton participated in what they called an all-church tennis tournament in the 1970s, although it might have been a regional event since all-church tennis ended in 1971. They married in 1972 and moved to Blanding, Utah, where they started playing mixed doubles in city competitions. The Thorntons did not remember exactly how they qualified, but they knew they had to have won other tournaments and then apply. Another player from Blanding had been to the tournament the year before and told the Thorntons about it. Four teams from the town went to the tennis meet at Brigham Young University. They recalled every match in detail. The tournament had an impact on the Thorntons; they won and received a trophy. The awards ceremony was at the tennis courts, and the committee served brownies and punch.

J. L. Thornton recalled, "The memories are what had meaning to us. The trophies don't mean anything at all. At the time I remember being a little disappointed that there wasn't more to it than that. I wanted some hoopla or some something. But since that time, over the years we reflect back on that a lot. I think some of the experiences we had playing tennis together and doing other things together have helped us get along a little better."[58]

Golf

The YMMIA Athletic Committee developed a golf tournament following World War II. Participants had to be seventeen years old and were divided into Explorer, senior, and veteran categories. Each group had a winner, and then the lowest score was the overall winner, which could come from any category. While church leaders encouraged stake play, they suggested that because of the individual nature of the sport, division tournaments were more successful. In 1964 the committee explained, "There isn't a lot of golf activity [on the ward or stake level] for golfers who love the game. You can whet the appetite of golfers for the region by encouraging stake" tournaments.

In 1952 all division winners and others who were eligible to play based on scores were invited to participate. Entrance fees were higher than the other church sports because of the green fees. In addition to the use of the course, the committee gave golfers tickets for a hamburger and two soft drinks. The tournament leaders held an award banquet; the golfers received a ticket; guests could pay to attend.[59] The Church used private and public courses in Utah over the years, including

the Alpine Country Club in American Fork, the Wasatch Mountain State Park in Midway, and the Meadowbrook and Willow Creek Golf courses in Salt Lake City. The tournament barely broke even, some years making a little money; and some years losing a little.[60]

In 1951, forty-five golfers competed in nine divisions at Salt Lake City's Fort Douglas Country Club. The participants were the winners from local tournaments; eighty-seven participated in a southern California meet. The tournament was so successful that as soon as it was over, leaders made plans for the 1952 meet. Organizers hoped for more than thirty-six holes in one day; they wanted a two- to four-day tournament with handicaps. That way it could draw "five times as many players. And it should too, for golf is a great game for hundreds of faithful Church men who enjoy its relaxation and golf links friendships."[61]

To promote the tournament, the Queen of the Days of 47–a celebration on July 24 in honor of the day Brigham Young entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847–posed with the trophies and the picture appeared in the *Deseret News*. The committee asked businesses to donate awards. The golf report bragged that the tournament would "develop into one of the top golf attractions in the state in years to come." Golfer Ben Hogan endorsed the program, "I can see a great future for your program–both in developing the popularity of golf and in building better American manhood. More power and success to your tournaments. I hope some day to be in your beautiful city for one of them."

The tournament continued to expand. In 1959 the first women's section was added. The women continued to play along side the men until 1962 when the *Church News* announced that the fourth annual golf tournament would not be at the same time as the YMMIA. That year Barbara Trish, a sixteen-year-old from Pensacola, Florida won the tournament and the newspaper bragged that participation was up 600 percent from the year before. In 1963 50 women took part in three categories: Nifty-Fifty for 50 years and old, Senior for 18 and older, and Junior for 13 to 18. Dorothy P. Holt, the activity counselor for the YWMIA, teed off first. To grandmothers had the best scores. While most of the women came from the Mountain States, there were representatives from Chicago and Las Vegas.[62]

The men's tournament continued. In 1960 non-professional male members age fifteen and older took part. Those playing had to attend church four times in the two months before they played.

According to the rules, participants could not have ever played on Sunday. Players took part in district tournaments. "To add interest and good fellowship," golfers played in flights of nine after the first eighteen holes. The final thirty-six holes were played round robin. Besides the overall winners, each flight had a winner. Participants paid a $7.50 entrance fee.[63]

Each year the committee encouraged men to play golf. In 1964 the committee reminded local church leaders that golf was an official part of church athletics. The program was more than just "basketball, softball, and maybe volleyball." Every region could have six or more golfers. The YMMIA committee asked that the regional meet should be encouraged, asking bishops and stake presidents to play with a handicap. Regional supervisors determined who came to the all-church tournament. However, only very good juniors should be invited who could compete with the seniors. That year 115 golfers qualified for all-church. Richard Harris, a junior from Menlo Park, California, set a course record the second day and became the first junior to win the tournament.[64] The 1968 tournament drew 270 golfers representing the 15,000 that had competed in 37 zone tournaments.

In 1967, Billy Casper, a professional golfer who had joined the Mormon Church, attended and provided training at the all-church golf tournament. The YMMIA honored him in 1967, the year after he received "Athlete of the Year" and "Top Performer in Golf" awards. Casper offered golf clinics, played exhibition matches, and handed out the awards. In 1970, two thousand fans watched Casper's exhibition. N. Eldon Tanner, then a member of the First Presidency, thanked Casper for being a church spokesman. Judy Donaldson explained, Casper had "joined the Church, and that's probably why we got him to do that. He was always very gracious about it. The participants enjoyed having him there to talk to them and teach them a few things. He was a good man."[65] As with the other athletic tournaments, golf was more than just a game. As Robert L. Simpson declared in 1968, "The First Presidency is delighted with the golf tournament" because "practice was key to success for golf" and in striving for "the Celestial Kingdom."[66]

Relay Races

History

Just as church leaders added softball, volleyball, tennis, and golf as churchwide sports in the 1950s, they also introduced a relay race. Relay races were part of the larger track and field events that traced their origins to the Greek. The word *athletics* comes from the Greek word athlon which

means contest. The Romans, Celts, Teutons, and Goths also raced as part of combat training. These activities continued through the Middle Ages but were banned in England between the thirteen and sixteenth centuries because of government restrictions. The government removed the ban in the seventh century, but races were not organized until the nineteenth century. Most athletic events took place around a 400-meter track.[67]

Mormons and Track and Field

Track and field programs were not new to the Mormon Church. Sports historian Richard Ian Kimball writes, "Tens of thousands of basketball games, thousands of baseball games, hundreds of track and field meets, and countless field days could be accounted for by naming the victorious or recounting final scores." In 1912, YMMIA General Board member Lyman R. Martineau wrote in the *Improvement Era*, "Our track meets are not primarily to make records, but are a part of a program to make men."[68]

In 1906 the eleventh June Conference in Salt Lake City included a half day and an evening of "field day exercises" at Calder's Park. The MIA sponsored its first official field day in 1911. That year a full day of athletic meets was held at Wandamere Park. Local areas also held track meets. The Millard, Utah, Stake had a meet for young men and women in April 1910. The next year the stake added music, debates, and a dance. One person wrote, "Some fifteen hundred people from different parts of the stake attended the gathering, and it was pronounced one of the most entertaining and instructive social and literary affairs and athletic meets ever held."[69]

In 1951 the YMMIA sponsored the first 400-yard shuttle relay race. Four men from the same stake each ran one-hundred yards. Unlike other relay races where the runners circle the track, all four men ran the same one-hundred yards. Teams participated in division meets and then came to the all-church race. The event was so popular that the YMMIA leaders added a 440 yard around the track race for 1952. The sixteen teams ran in heats between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. just before the June Conference All-Church Dance Festival. The *Church News* claimed that the thirty-thousand spectators was the largest crowd for any track event in the Rocky Mountain West and more than all the college track meets in Utah combined. The "4 gallopers" from Temple View Stake, Salt Lake City, who had won the year before repeated with a forty-four second run in the shuttle. They finished second to the Mesa, Arizona, Stake entry in the 440. Unlike church rules for basketball, school track

and field stars could compete in the races. Ron Prince from the Temple View Ward team ran track at South High School in Salt Lake and was the fastest man in the state high school meet. Dick Millett led Mesa High School to the Arizona state track championship and was voted the "outstanding cinderman."[70] The relays continued in the 1950s.[71]

Dance Festivals

The relays had a huge audience, but the people were there to see the dancers and not just the races. While most all-church programs were competitive because they led to a tournament, the dance festival was a spectator event. The dancers came from throughout the Church and performed the same dances. But the festival was only the climax of a year of dancing for the young men and women. The MIA also sponsored drama and speech festivals throughout the year and at June Conference. For this study, the dance festival will represent all the cultural arts.

History

The word dance comes from a German word which means to stretch or drag. Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Dancing in the Street: A History of Collective Joy*, explains that "disputes over who can dance, how and where, are at least as old as civilization." Mormon scholar J. B. Jennings argues that dance had its beginnings in religion. It was a form of worship for "primitive man" where every activity was considered religious. Native Americans, Hawaiians, and citizens of India had traditional dances with religious beginnings. The Egyptians and Jews also danced. The Greeks especially included dance in their worship. But the "far more strait-laced Romans" opposed the Greek god Dionysus, the god of ecstasy, in 186 BC and then eliminated dancing schools.[72]

The dilemma of dance and worship continued in Christian churches. According to dance scholar Marilyn Daniels, dance was a part of worship for the first five centuries of the early church. The Bishop of Mende, G. Durangus, described a *pelota* dance where priests played ball games, danced, and sang with their clerks in the thirteen, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. E. Louis Backman, a professor of pharmacology at the Royal University of Upsala, explains that throughout the Catholic Church dance served ceremonial and popular purposes even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A ceremonial example performed by priests was a choristers' dance in the Seville cathedral in 1916. A popular dance performed by congregations was a dance procession in Echternach in 1904. Backman concludes, "The Christian religious dances continued from the end

of the third century in unbroken succession until our own day." (His book was published in 1952.)[73] However, Daniels disagrees with this conclusion. She believes that by the end of the eighteenth century, few churches used dance. She cited the Shakers as an exception, and that did not last long since the religion slowly died out when the millennium did not come as hoped for.[74]

But just as the Greeks and the Romans disagreed about the role of dance, so did the Christian churches. According to Backman, "The struggle of the Church against religious dances in churches, chapels, and churchyards began as early as the fourth century." Some religious leaders felt that some dance was "vicious and indecent, with improper songs." They also objected to men and women dancing together. Backman then recites the ban against dancing down through the centuries just as he described the dancing being a part of worship. Some churches worried that dance stirred sexual feelings. The archbishop of Constantinople declared at the end of the fourth century, "For where there is dance, there is also the Devil." In the seventh century the Catholic church condemned dance as idleness. But the policy was not always consistent. Daniels said that during the eighth and ninth century, the Church declared some dance as pagan. But later in the medieval period, the Church created its own dances to attract worshipers. Dance continued to be a part of the church until the Reformation.[75]

When did the Catholic Church eliminate dance? Studies disagree. The Catholic Church attempted to ban dance centuries before but did not succeed until the fourteenth century. This resulted in dance "manias" in Europe when many people mocked the priests who tried to prevent their dancing. Daniels believed, "The Reformation, which began in 1525, eventually put an end to dance within the service of the Church." However, some new churches continued to dance. The Puritans' views demonstrate this dilemma. Mormon dance scholar Karl E. Wesson explained the Puritans banned mixed dancing (men and women), Maypole dancing, and dancing at festivals. He quotes a 1684 Boston ministers' publication "An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing, Drawn out of the Quiver of the Scriptures." Daniels, on the other hand, explained the Puritans opposed dance when it took part with celebrations because it was considered pagan. But if it was associated with the Bible, ministers felt it helped praise the Lord.[76]

Dance historians have explained this back and forth debate about dance through the centuries. While dance was popular in American society during the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, many religions were still against it when Joseph Smith Jr. organized his church in 1830. In 1847 the Central Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati published *A Discourse on Dancing* which was typical of nineteenth century pamphlets against dance. The author N. L. Rice explains that dance as worship in the Bible was only women dancing together. He condemns men and women dancing together because of physical contact. He also argues that dancing was damaging to the participants' health, especially women.[77]

J. Douglas Thomas, a professor at East Texas Baptist College, discussed similar concerns in the Southern Baptist congregations. While the Church usually focuses on the individual and not the institution, he explained it has opposed dance throughout its history in America. The main concern was recreational dance which the church associates with bad company, bad habits, sexual practices and emotions and worldly pleasures.[78]

Brian Branam, a Baptist pastor in Birmingham, Alabama, wrote about dance in his "Feeling the Faith" blog in 2007. "2 Samuel 6:14 says that 'David danced before the LORD with all his might,' If David were a Baptist . . . he would not have danced. I can't dance. But that's OK because I'm Baptist. . . . I have never read the official doctrinal position on dancing, but from everything I have heard about dancing through the years, I am pretty sure we're against it."[79] Another internet site agreed. In answer to the question "should Christians dance," the authors concluded, "Since dancing is so closely associated with the works of the flesh, and since those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, Christians should avoid dancing."[80]

In the 1930s *Vision*, a youth magazine for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS, now the Community of Christ), warned, "Because of dangerous elements of misdirected impulses and unwholesome associations the church looks with disfavor on the social dance." It continued, "There are lots of activities that can be equally as enjoyable and more profitable than the social dance." These included "rhythm games and folk dances [that] will give all the muscular coordination, ease of being, grace and good exercise and social fellowship of the social dance and be free from its less desirable traits." Historian Roger D. Launius who grew in the RLDS Church during the 1960s, was not allowed to dance.[81]

Marilyn Daniels explains dance became part of worship again in the twentieth century. Ruth St. Denis experimented with movement in 1912 and used dance in worship at the

Interdenominational Church in San Francisco in 1917. Her work with Ted Shawn in traveling across the country to share religious dance was celebrated by *Time Magazine* in 1964. Margaret Fisk Taylor celebrated these types of dances in her 1967 book *A Time to Dance: Symbolic Movement in Worship*. She describes the history of movement in worship, focusing on the twentieth century. Most of her book though is a guidebook on how to include choirs and dance in religious ceremonies.[82]

Mormons and Dance

Unlike the Community of Christ which also traces its roots to Joseph Smith Jr., the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has included dance almost from the beginning. A 1959 *Time Magazine* called the Mormons "the dancingest denomination." Georganna Ballif Arrington, a LDS dancer, clarified this statement, "Although not found in Mormon worship, dance does exist in abundance in the peripheries–in the recreational and educational programs."[83]

Mormon history bears out this comment. Brigham Young grew up with the idea that dance was wrong. As an adult, he rebelled against that teaching and encouraged dance. He encouraged church members to dance as they moved from Illinois to Utah. Once in the Great Basin, he built a theater and dance hall, and early Mormons regularly attended dances. But there were restrictions. Early Mormons participated in square dancing and the Virginia Reel, but church leaders outlawed the waltz. While Young believed, "Fiddling and dance are not part of our worship," he felt dance was important so the "body [could] keep pace with the mind. My mind labors like a man logging, all the time, and this is the reason why I am fond of these pastimes–they give me a privilege to throw everything off and shake myself." Karl Wesson, who wrote a master's thesis on dance in the LDS Church, concluded the church had halls "where socials and dances may be held under proper supervision." Religion needed to include the "carefree as well as the serious moments of life."[84]

Acceptable dances changed over time. The older generation thought that the current dances were too suggestive, but theirs had been acceptable. MIA allowed some modern dances but also taught the classics from other generations. A 1958-59 poem suggested that the waltz, the rhumba, the fox trot, and tango each had "a place. And it's more fun than ever to swing when you do it with rhythm and grace."[85] Dress and performance standards were important because "what you do, what we do, is a reflection on the church as a whole and the world judges the church by the example we set."[86] In 1962, MIA leaders Joseph T. Bentley and Florence Jacobsen considered any dance with

"intimate dance positions in poor taste and must be avoided if we are to maintain church standards and keep dance as part of our MIA program."[87]

In 1923, MIAs became responsible for social activities, and dance was an important element. Instructions for dance directors appeared in the *Improvement Era.* Church leaders insisted that ward directors be responsible for all dances held in the buildings. So wards started some new ideas to encourage teenagers to come to meetings. For example, some wards started having a dance after MIA. That practice was discontinued because the meetings ran too late for students, but the MIA planned monthly activities and many of these included dance.[88]

Gold and Green Balls

Dance took place on several levels in the LDS Church. Besides the monthly MIA activities, the highlight of a ward's activity calendar was the annual Gold and Green Ball. (Gold and green were the MIA colors.) While the Gold and Green Ball focused on the youth, everyone over fourteen attended. Fathers often danced with daughters and mothers with sons. The goal was to learn social grace. During the intermission, dancers performed a choreographed number as a "floor show." This could be couples waltzing or square dancing. It could also be girls doing a line dance.

Ned B. Roueche, who later served as a General Authority, remembered he had not attended church meetings for years when a woman asked him to perform with her in a floor show. He explained, "Dancing was a hobby of mine," and he had studied ballroom techniques. He learned the dance and arrived to perform. Roueche was surprised when theirs was the only performance. But "it was an exciting experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed the evening." The next Sunday he went to church. Eventually he served a mission. Looking back he recalled, "That evening so long ago when I was invited to share my talent, the door opened to a wonderful new world of friends and activity in the Church."[89]

Stakes also held Gold and Green Balls. In 1937 the Los Angeles Stake presented a pageant at a Gold and Green Ball "woven around the theme: 'America, land which is choice above all other lands.'" Each ward presented a time period from the Book of Mormon to the present. The final group was "America as a Land of Destiny to which all nations will come." With a thousand people who attended, the article concluded, "All in all this was probably the highest expression of MIA recreational activity in the history of the Los Angeles Stake."[90]

A 1930 *Improvement Era* handbook included Gold and Green dance activities. The MIAs in three Nephi, Utah, wards worked with the Juab Stake Board for a 1930 ball. The groups decorated the Arlington Pavilion with the MIA colors and included "an artistic canopied throne in green and gold for the Queen of Colors." Those who arrived before 9:00 p.m. voted for the queen because the Juab Stake believed "that the Queen should not be chosen by tardy guests." Once the queen was selected, she was crowned. "A tiny but dignified crown bearer" carried the crown in and "tiny flower girls in butterfly dresses scattered flowers on the line of march." The "ladies in waiting," those not selected as queen, arrived with her and then after the crowning the Queen and the attendants received "bouquets of sweet peas and rose buds."[91]

The four wards in Rexburg, Idaho, worked with the Fremont Stake to plan a similar dance. The ward and stake leaders wore outfits to set them apart from the rest of the dancers. "The young men from one ward wore gold-colored shirts with green ties and the ladies gold and green collars and cuffs." Each ward had selected a queen and two attendants who were all introduced and crowned. The Queen of Attendance was chosen based on the percentage of MIA members attending the dance. Six "graceful couples" danced a floor show number "the Gold and Green Caprice." The report also included similar descriptions of the East Jordan, Utah, Stake, the Twin Falls, Idaho, Stake, and the California Mission.[92]

Dance Festivals

Stake, regional, and all-church dance festivals provided another level for those who especially enjoyed dance. For these festivals couples or groups of dancers learned routines. They performed them with others who had learned the same dance. In March 1953 a St. George, Utah, newspaper announced a regional dance festival in the Dixie Sun Bowl, a football stadium at Dixie Junior College, on May 9. After the event, the paper declared, "No details [were] overlooked" and "all this [was] done without charge which [was] another reminder that the best things in life are free." The thousand dancers from southern Utah and Nevada created a "glorious spectacle . . . not matched anywhere in all the world."[93]

In the 1960s, Kathy Hoffman danced at a festival held at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. Salt Lake YWMIA leaders sent material, and the girls made their dresses. She was glad to learn to sew and make modest-length dresses in the miniskirt era. After learning the dance, the girls traveled

by bus. It was “symbolic” for her to be able to learn the dance in a small group and then dance with a crowd. She also thought it was “cool” to see everyone in the matching outfits. Dance was Hoffman’s connection to the Church; her family was inactive, but the bishop and his daughter supported her in church activities.[94]

June Conference Dance Festival

In 1928 the MIA added a dance contest to June Conference. At first it was a competition. All members were invited to enter, and they were judged on dance steps, position, and rhythm. After tryouts, the winners came to Saltair, a recreational facility on the Great Salt Lake. Mormon church leaders built the first Saltair in 1893 to create “a wholesome place for recreation” and a place where non-Mormons could see that Mormons had fun. The church sold the resort in 1906 to a group of Mormon businessmen. The first pavilion burned in 1925 but was replaced the next year. Although the LDS Church did not own the resort, it was a favorite place for dances including the dance festival.[95]

In 1936 the First Presidency asked the MIA to "create higher ideals among young people" in all recreation including dance. So in 1939 the MIA published a dance manual. The dance instruction included (1) rhythm awareness, (2) positions, (3) poise, (4) relaxation, and (5) knowledge of steps. The manual explained, "If one has the fundamentals of the dance forms--waltz, tango, fox trot--well grounded, one can easily pick up the popular variations."[96]

In 1937 dancers participated in local stake festivals and then sent couples to the church festival to do the fox trot and waltz. That year "Mutual Messages" announced plans for the "church-wide dance festival" on June 11. So that everyone would be dancing together for the same length of time and at the same tempo, the instructions carefully spelled out how long and how fast each dance should be performed.

1. Fox trot to "Aloha Oe" ("Farewell to Thee"). Each stake or mission could enter eight couples.
2. Original waltz to the refrain of "When It's Springtime in the Rockies." The dance committee focused on waltz techniques during the year and each stake and mission created an original waltz. These units could send two couples. The dance would be sixty-four measures (the refrain repeated twice) and the tempo would be ninety-six counts a minute.
3. Floor Show Demonstrations. The General MIA would review fox trot and waltz dances

developed for floor shows. Two would be selected for the festivals. Others would be performed during the reception two hours before the festival.

4. Original fox trot to "Gypsy Sweetheart." Two couples from each stake or mission could participate. The dance was thirty-two measures (the refrain twice) and the tempo was fifty-six beats a minute.

5. Centennial Waltz to refrain of "Ciribiribin." The committee explained, "In order to give added color and beauty to the Festival it has been decided to do this number in Spanish costume." Each stake or mission could have one or two couples, but only those in costume could take part.

6. Hawaiian Group. A group from the Oahu Stake and a "native number."

7. "Gleam Waltz" to "Let me Call You Sweetheart." Eight to ten couples from each stake and mission could participate. "This will be the finale and the big mass dance of the evening."

The article asked stakes to plan a "strong Stake Festival which will be a miniature of the big Festival." It concluded, “Let us all begin now to dance” because it “will put color and life into the program of your spring months.”[97]

The dance festival continued to grow. In 1947 for the Utah pioneer centennial, the festival moved to the football stadium at the University of Utah to accommodate all the dancers and the audience. Clayton Bishop took part that year and described the steps the dancers went through to be able to participate. The stake leaders called Bishop and his wife to be dance instructors in Wayne County, Utah, in 1947. The couple traveled to Gunnison, Sanpete County, to learn the dances from MIA field secretary W. O. Robinson. Bishop recalled, “He would teach the people the dances he wanted to do at the dance festival.” Then the Bishops returned to the wards in their stake and taught the dances. They selected one couple from the four towns in Wayne County to go to Salt Lake City.

The dance festival was a highlight for Bishop. “It was really exciting to participate with so many people [10,000] that knew the same dance” including dancers from Alberta, Canada. “I always loved to dance, but these were a little different. The women had the big skirts on, and the men were all dressed up. I’ll never forget marching on. They were playing ‘Carry On’ [an MIA song]. We all stepped together. It was fun. We looked up at the old flag and saw it waving. It was a thrill to even be on the football field watching so many of us doing the same step at the same time.” The Bishops learned seven or eight dances. “It was amazing how [Robinson] would call a number and we would

all step to the tune."

It was a spiritual moment for Bishop when despite rain during the rehearsals and at the start of the final program, the rain stopped after the amen on the opening prayer. He enjoyed meeting the other dancers. "On our first dance, the first night, we all mixed up, and we were just having a ball." He remembered the stadium was filled "right to the enth degree." A live orchestra was on the west side. The members had microphones so the dancers could hear the music. Bishop said everyone "wanted to dance," and the program continued until after midnight. "The orchestra quit first and got tired. But we just still wanted to dance."[98]

The festival was always a big draw. Over thirty thousand saw the 1952 festival, and organizers estimated that fifteen thousand people who wanted to attend were turned away. The two-hour program featured Maori dances, waltzes, ballets, rumbas, and square dances. The event gave "dancers fun and thousands of spectators enjoyable entertainment." The *Church News* description that year applied for all the years. "The great field flood lights were turned off while the large groups [would find] their places on it for the next dance." During the break, "Skillful small troupes of dancers with mesmerizing splashes of fanciful color, excitement, and designs achieved high dancing honors." The event started with a flag ceremony and an opening prayer. It ended with twenty-seven hundred "Junior Gleaners and Gleaners all dressed in white formals" dancing to a recording of the Tabernacle Choir singing "Carry On." The article concluded, "To a man, everyone, of course throughly enjoyed the great show."[99]

Because the 1952 dance festival was so successful, the dancers performed on two nights in 1953. Over fifty thousand spectators watched the nine thousand dancers highlighted by the three-thousand participants in the all-girls dance.[100] Each year was similar. In June 1963, seven thousand dancers performed eleven sections based on the theme "Beyond the Blue Horizon."[101] In 1971 admission was 50 cents for stadium seats and one dollar for chair seats.[102]

In 2006, Sara Lee Gibb, dean of the College of Health and Human Performance Administration and a professor of dance at Brigham Young University, recalled a typical all-church dance festival when she was a youth and later when she helped plan the performances. As a teenager, she recalled, "It was exciting for us. I grew up right under the Grand Tetons. To come from that little valley and to be able to come to Salt Lake was always quite exciting."

Later she was asked to help plan the activities. She remembered that the dance festivals were always "very well organized as they had to be. There were thousands of people participating." She guessed there were often "five or six hundred" dancers on the field at once "in circles, squares, and different formations. They would just fill the field with that. They'd have ten or twelve numbers plus the stage things. Then they usually had a narration with it, so it was a beautiful program." According to Gibb, the festival had "all kinds of different rhythms. There would be Latin rhythms, there would be two step kinds of things, and there would always be a group of waltzes."

Getting ready for the event took effort. Gibb remembered, "A typical day at the All-Church Festival was pre-regimented. They had a lot of people to help." Assigned people explained the mapping on the field to the wards and stakes. The dances "were all done in formations and very interesting. That also made it complicated to rehearse because we had people going different ways and lots of threading through. Sometimes they'd do ribbon things that would highlight what the formations were." The purpose was "to create something that would be really visually exciting from a distance."

Gibb remembered the practices when she was a teenager. "I think it was probably a two-hour show. Our piece was three, four, or five minutes." For her, the rehearsals were "really long days. It was usually quite warm in the sun, and we were outside. I actually remember seeing a few people faint here and there from the heat." She remembered being provided a lunch. "It was pretty much a dayful." Then there was another practice the evening before the festival.[103]

As with Gibb, Shauna Gee performed a square dance at the June Conference dance festival when she was a sophomore in high school. In 2005 Gee still had her costume: "pink and white checks [with] little bloomers." She remembered practicing and wondering how the program would work out. "We came out and took our places marked where we needed to be. We had to remember this was where we had to go when it was time for us to square dance."[104]

Gee said that her grandmother came to watch. "She thought it was such a cool thing." Gee continued, "I remember being thrilled that night going out there and everyone dancing and looking so cool. I remember seeing the other groups and everything moving so smoothly. It was fun to do the dance." Gibb said the two performances were sold out because "it was very popular with non-Mormons. They tried to come in and see us too because it was such a great spectacle."[105]

While dance provided an activity for women, men also enjoyed the festivals. Mel Olson from Afton, Wyoming, played high school basketball and ward softball. But he also danced in the 1960s. He recalled attending ward, stake and regional dances. But the "gigantic" festival was in Salt Lake City. "It was cool to be involved in dance." He compared the dance festival to a Brigham Young University program called "Christmas Around the World." The participants "had different numbers and different regions. . . . It was a fun thing in the dance area for people to be involved with."[106]

Dance Stories

R. Christine Ollerton

R. Christine Ollerton, a dance professor at BYU, started dancing as a young girl to overcome the effects of polio. As a teenager, her ward bishop called her and a teenage boy to be the dance directors. They were responsible for monthly dances, which included arranging for music and refreshments and planning mixers to get everyone involved.

Besides the ward dances, Ollerton taught dances for a stake dance festival. Couples went from there to a regional and then to the all-church festival. Ollerton recalled, "The stake leaders directed [the stake festival]. As ward leaders we just had to make sure our ward was there and in costume. The stake festivals were exciting and fun. It was enlightening and insightful." The dances were "more a ballroom type" although there were "novelty or specialty dances also." Ollerton recalled, "It wasn't competitive" to go to the next level. "If you participated, obeyed, and kept the rules, got the costumes, and knew the piece, you went." The rules were "to maintain church standards, be to rehearsals, obey the leaders, and cooperate. . . . The kids pretty much followed those rules. Either that or they eliminated themselves somewhere along the way."[107]

Naomi Reynolds

Naomi Reynolds remembered her Hemet Ward performed in the Southern California Regional Dance Festival. The ward dance directors, Joseph and Bernice Sly, worked with the MIA General Board Dance Committee. Bernice choreographed the unique dances. The youth had "many rehearsals" and "traveled many hours." They did "formal ballroom dances, folk dances, and classical formations. The costumes were beautiful and appropriate. The young people displayed dignity, charm, cooperation, team work, and patience."

Reynolds recalled that the regional festival was so large the local MIA leaders leased a large

facility each year such as the Pasadena Rose Bowl, the Los Angeles Coliseum, or the East Los Angeles Stadium. She summarized, "These performances were so phenomenal. I would like to classify them as a big part of a 'golden era of LDS cultural events.'"[108]

Kathy Hoffman

Kathy Hoffman's father had been baptized into the Mormon Church but did not attend church meetings. Still his name was on the church records. Church members visited the family and took Kathy to Primary. She wanted to join the Church like her classmates there. Kathy took the lessons and was baptized when she was nine. The MIA program was a turning point in her life. She was very shy, but taking part in drama and dance activities gave her confidence.

All these activities provided a safe haven for Hoffman, "Here we were living in the 1960s, which was a difficult time to be a teenager. Everything was falling apart. There were so many bad things going on. People were experimenting with stuff. . . . It was so good to have that group that when you were there you just felt comfortable and you felt secure in doing what the gospel was teaching you was right. . . . I don't know if I could have survived my teenage years without the support of that group."[109]

David Smart

David Smart grew up in Rexburg, Idaho, in the 1950s. The dance activities gave him social activities and dates. Ward dances for Smart were "very romantic." The entire ward attended and performed the latest dances including the swing. Smart remembered going to the dance festival in Salt Lake City. In preparation, the couples practiced in the Rexburg Tabernacle basement once a week. It was a weekly date for him. The instructor, Lola Pearson, carefully taught the steps "in a very elementary way." After the twelve to fifteen couples learned the routine, they performed it at floor shows around Rexburg. Then they rented a bus and went to June Conference. They stayed at a motel and went to the University of Utah football stadium for rehearsals and performances. A highlight was when MIA leader Ruth May Fox attended a practice, and the group sang her church hymn, "Shall the Youth of Zion Falter."[110]

V. Gale Lewis

V. Gale Lewis did not take part in sports, but the LDS dance and drama program helped her in the 1970s. She started attending seminary with her friends and joined the Church when she was

fifteen. She participated in drama and dance shows. One of her favorites was a show that demonstrated dances through the decades. She also took part in regional dance festivals at the San Jose State University football stadium.

Lewis's ward sponsored a debutante ball for senior girls. Their fathers escorted the girls to the stage. Since her father was not a church member, he chose not to attend. Instead she got her boyfriend's father, a member of the high council, to walk with her. Lewis and her nonmember mother made and decorated the cake for the dance; Lewis remembered her embarrassment when the master of ceremonies made that announcement as she was escorted in. Looking back, she felt, "We looked silly." But the experience had a lasting impact because it created a sense of "fellowship" for the girls and the ward.[111]

Summary

The YMMIA and the YWMIA leaders encouraged young Mormons to develop testimonies and strong bodies. These goals were encouraged through sports such as basketball, softball, volleyball, tennis, golf, and relay races. While basketball and softball dominated, other sports and activities were also important for the youth. Dance in particular provided an opportunity to bring young men and women together. Though young women also played team games or sports, they did not compete in the all-church tournaments. They did take part though in the tennis and golf tournaments.

The MIA all-church programs continued to flourish until the 1970s, when the General Authorities ended them. The next chapter discusses the reasons why the programs were phased out along with recent plans to return to some activities.

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2. J. L. and Mary Thornton Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, 8, LDS Sports and Recreation Oral History Project, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. (Unless otherwise cited, all oral histories come from this collection.)

3.*Improvement Era* (October 1970):35.

4. LaRue C. Longden, "June Conference 1951," *Improvement Era* (May 1951):327.

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6. A *Church News* article announced the first annual all-church horseshoes tournament in connection with the all-church softball. Those wanting to participate had to submit an application signed by their bishop and division athletic supervisor. The players provided their own horseshoes and paid their own expenses. *Church News*, July 18, 1959, 15. Doug Hardy discussed playing horseshoes. Doug Hardy Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, Orem, Utah.

7. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1971, Church History Library, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Hereinafter referred to as LDS Church Library.) Used by permission.

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15. “Explorers,” *Improvement Era* (December 1936):787.

16. “Explorers,” *Improvement Era* (January 1938): 49.

17. “Explorers,” *Improvement Era* (March 1938):181.

18. “Explorers,” *Improvement Era* (January 1939): 48; (March 1939): 177.

19. “Explorers,” *Improvement Era* (May 1941):304.

20. “Explorers,” *Improvement Era* (April 1942):240.

21. “Report of MIA Activities,” *Improvement Era* (July 1950):550.

22. YMMIA Athletic Department, Church Record 15/1, LDS Church Library.

23. *YMMIA Athletic Handbook, 1952-53*, 50-64; *1958-59*, 23.

24. Judy Donaldson Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 7; Henry Whiffen Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Orem, Utah, 9.

25. Donaldson Oral History, 7; Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1972, Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, Church Record 14/20, Church History Library. Used with permission.

26. Ibid.

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28.*Improvement Era* (July 1962):502; (May 1964):562; (July 1965):600; (June 1967):15; (July 1967):74; (July 1968):6; (June 1969):122; (July 1970):58, 64; correspondence from Joseph K. Borger, in possession of author; Veloria, 19-20.

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30. Ray Hale Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 4.

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32. Donaldson, 9.

33. Ray Oaks Oral History, interviewed by Justin Flake, 2003, Boise, Idaho, 5.

34. Donaldson, 9; Dale Christensen Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, Orem, Utah, 5.

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36. Ibid., 4. 13.

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38. Richard Ball Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 4,5.

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54. Church News Staff, *The Church in Action, 1971* (Salt Lake City: Church News, 1972), 27.

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57. Donaldson, 9.

58. Thornton, 10.

59. *YMMIA Athletic Handbook, 1952-53*, 65-66; *1971-72*, 10-11; YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, Church History Library. Used by permission.

60. For example,
1959--Alpine Country Club and Wasatch Mountain State Park
1963 Meadowbrook Golf Course
1964 Willow Creek Golf Course
1965, men played, Willow Creek; women, Meadowbrook
1967 Alpine Country Club
1968 Alpine Country Club
1969 Alpine and Wasatch Mountain
1970 Alpine and Wasatch Mountain
Very short announcements of the golf tournament appeared in the church magazine. See *Improvement Era* (October 1959):41; (September 1963):787; (October 1963):826; (September 1967):712; (September 1965):748-49); (September 1966):808; (September 1967):60; (October 1967):79; (September 1968):89; (October 1969):78; (October 1970):35; *Church News*, August 3, 1968, 12; August 15, 1968, 15.

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Chapter 6

LDS Church Youth Activities Since the 1970s

The End of All-Church Tournaments

At June Conference 1971, YMMIA General Superintendent W. Jay Eldredge announced the "elimination of all-Church [*sic*] championship finals in all athletic events." Eldredge justified the change, "We want to stress that the reasoning behind the new program, which is under the direction of the General Authorities, is we will have the opportunity to hold larger and more interesting events. We anticipate that the area tournaments will increase the activity of the youth and the participation of youth and adult in leadership roles." He also explained that the large-scale dance festival would be replaced with regional events. However, dance, drama, and speech would continue to be a "sidelight" at June Conference. Eldredge encouraged local areas to plan programs that fit their needs.[1]

This policy was restated with brief announcements in the *New Era*, the Church's magazine for teenagers, and the *Ensign*, the Church's adult magazine. The *New Era* article read:

"Young Men's Athletic Program

1. No more all-Church tournaments. The Church, now worldwide, wants to emphasize sports on a local basis rather than have teams travel to Salt Lake City.
2. Athletic tournaments will be held on an area basis. . . .
3. The emphasis on zone or area sports will allow sports that are popular in different countries and areas to be played."

"*Dance*

1. No more all-Church dance festivals. Instead, area or regional festivals may be held. This gives opportunity for more people to perform."[2]

The *Ensign* article rationalized: "Because of the growth of the Church throughout the world, all-Church athletic tournaments will be replaced with area tournaments. Beginning with the 1971-72 MIA year (September 1, 1971 to August 31, 1972) nine areas in the United States and Canada will

conduct their own Church tournaments. All sports will be on ward, stake, regional, zone, and area levels with one exception: competition in senior basketball (Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood-adult) will be on a stake and regional basis and not extend to a zone or area level." Changes also took place in music and dance festivals. "To permit increased participation at a local level, MIA music and dance festivals will in the future be held on a regional or area basis." While these would continue during June Conference, "participants will be from [the Salt Lake City] area only." Larger multiregional festivals could be held when priesthood and MIA leaders approved.[3]

What was the difference between the regional meets before and after this new policy? Church leaders and participants never viewed the regional meets in the all-church sports, basketball, softball, and volleyball, as the final goal. The regional tournaments were just one of the steps necessary to get to the all-church tournament. Of course, some teams never went to Salt Lake City; for them the regional meet was the final stop. But even for them, the ultimate goal was still all-church. After the change in policy, the regional meet was the final event. Church leaders instructed the regional sports directors to make the regional tournaments something that the players and their coaches would want to attend just as they had all-church tournaments.

Unlike sports, the dance festivals had not usually been competitive to attend. Dancers had always looked forward to the regional festivals as a final performance. The Salt Lake City experience was very large, and the participants enjoyed meeting and dancing with many people. While the regional meets were not as large, they could be as satisfying as the larger festival because the participants could dance with a group and meet new people. The shift from the all-church festival to the regional activities had an impact on those who wanted to go to Salt Lake City. However, the regional meets allowed more people be involved in dancing.

The Immediate Reasons for Ending All-Church

Church Growth

Why did these changes take place? As the *Ensign* article explained, a growing church was the number one concern that led to the change. A few numbers demonstrate this growth. During the 1960s, LDS Church leaders organized two hundred new stakes and nearly two thousand new wards. Only 20 percent of the new stakes were in Utah (a quarter of those at Brigham Young University); 60 percent were in the rest of the United States, and 20 percent were outside of the United States. This was a major change from 1900 when there were forty-three stakes and only two outside of the United States–one in Mexico and one in Canada, both in the Mormon colonies.[4] Even the athletic program showed this change. In the 1950s there were seventeen divisions: eight were in Utah; three were outside the Intermountain West. By the time the program ended in 1971, there were thirty-nine zones throughout the world which were broken down into divisions and regions.[5]

Historians James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard explained that the change from all-church activities "was designed to stimulate greater local participation and minimize expenses and logistical problems involved in annual treks to Salt Lake City."[6] The few Charles Redd Center for Western Studies interviewees who discussed the end of the tournaments restated the Church's position that growth was the major concern. With all the international growth, the Church was too large to have a tournament in Utah.[7]

Church growth led to other concerns. Some teams traveled long distances. The tournament was expensive for those who traveled and for the Church when so many out-of-town teams had to be housed and fed. Dale Christensen grew up in Idaho and took part in all-church basketball, softball, volleyball, and dance during the 1960s. He remembered when those programs ended, "We were a little surprised, a little disappointed. They told us that the Church was getting so big, they just couldn't carry it on. It was expensive with people traveling. The reason we were told was there was

some liability in traveling. Maybe there were some accidents."[8]

Another athlete, Thomas Bagley who grew up in the Salt Lake Valley, remembered participating in church basketball, softball, and volleyball. He enjoyed the games and especially appreciated working with his father, the ward's coach. When asked about these programs, Bagley said he had "sort of bitter sweet feelings" about the tournaments ending. "Especially nowadays, there's no way the Church could have one all encompassing tournament with the way the Church is spread out and the number of wards and stakes there are." While he knew the program had started in the 1920s, "the glory days or the golden days were probably the 1950s or the 1960s when the TV came and put this championship game on television and it became a big deal." While he recognized that the travel was extensive and the general costs overwhelming, he missed the fact that boys and men from throughout the Church could not meet through sports. "I can see both sides of it."[9]

Worldwide Church Membership

Growth did not mean only travel and an expensive tournament. It also meant that people from throughout the world were Latter-day Saints. While Americans (including missionaries) had spread their sports throughout the world, other countries played games that were not part of the American tradition. Church leaders wanted to support physical activities and not just American sports. The 1971-72 MIA *Athletic Handbook* stated that the Mormon Church sponsored senior, M Men, and Explorer basketball; senior and Explorer softball; senior and Explorer volleyball; veteran, senior, and Explorer golf; and tennis. But YMMIA leaders stressed that those did not have to be the only options. While participation had always been emphasized, the choices of sports that the Church sponsored had been limited. Without all-church, the types of sports could be unlimited. The manual explained, "Participation is a prime objective of the Church priesthood athletic program. There are many who cannot compete in basketball, volleyball, softball. These, and many others, may be interested in less strenuous activity" that ward and stake leaders could determine. Some possibilities

included "archery, badminton, bicycling, bowling, cricket, croquet, fencing, gymnastics, handball, horseback riding, lacrosse, paddle ball, running, shuffleboard, skating, skiing, squash, swimming, table tennis, track, [and] wrestling." Leaders often encouraged co-ed sports that had "man and wife" or "boy and girl" teams. While usually these sports would be on the ward or stake basis, general church leaders agreed that they could be expanded to include several wards if the stake president and stake YMMIA superintendent agreed.[10]

Church leaders stressed, "We should always remember and keep uppermost in mind that our greatest concern is the welfare of each individual participant in athletic events. The entire recreational and athletic program is a means to an end, and that end, of course, is to build Latter-day Saints strong in the faith and dedicated to the Church. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep in mind that the athletic program is only a part of the great MIA institution. Athletics are an excellent drawing card and missionary tool in attracting young men to the Church and in reactivating many who have become inactive."[11] With that in mind, the leaders explained, "The type of sports selected will vary throughout the Church and will be decided by local priesthood and YMMIA officers. Such sports will consist of athletic activity which fits the needs, interests, and cultures of the membership in that particular area. For example, sports selected for Europe or the Orient may be different than those selected for the US and Canada."[12]

Abuses of the Program

While growth was probably the major impetus for the change, some players and coaches had not always followed the rules. For example, Edgehill Ward basketball player Allen Brown explained, "The excitement of being in the all-church tournament just created an abuse of the system."[13] Teams tried to "draft" players. The offer of a job to Larry Schlappi to move to California if he would live in a ward and play church ball was not unique. Dale Robinson recalled a similar team in southern California which recruited former BYU players to work in construction and play

on church teams.[14]

Daniel Burbank, who grew up in Weston, Idaho, also recalled abuses. First he explained a case where the team followed the rules. He told about some former high school players who put together an M Men team from Idaho that included two nonmembers, but they met the requirement to attend church meetings. His low point in church sports came when he lived in Hayward, California, and played a team from Alameda, California, at the all-church tournament. Burbank took the ball away from their superstar twice because he dribbled too high. The star was upset and "knocked me out cold." Burbank was unhappy that the team went on to win all-church even though the Alameda manager said his players broke the Word of Wisdom. Burbank blamed poor officials and supervision for the problems, but he still felt, "It was a beautiful program if it had been conducted properly."[15]

Scott Beal, a softball player from Merced, California, agreed. While ending the tournament was "a little bit of a let down," there were concerns because "some of the people got too aggressive. They were into the win and not the association. If that's the way they want to play the game, I'd rather see them not." For him sports showed "those who boost morale and [those] who whine and moan." For him winning was "secondary" but it had become primary to most who played church sports.[16]

Ron Record from southern California also believed a lack of sportsmanship was a reason for ending all-church tournaments. He complained about his own team as well as the opponents. His basketball team went to the all-church tournament the last year (1971), and the coach was very competitive. "He would get the biggest ringer [a good player who might be a non-Mormon or a Mormon recruited to live in the ward boundaries] he could find." In the first game, Record's team played Lincoln, Nebraska, and was winning by thirty or forty points, yet the coach still had the starters in. Record finally got into the game when someone from the audience yelled, "What about

those guys you haven't played?" The coach complied and emptied the bench. Record got in and made a basket. Then he started passing the ball so everyone had a chance to score. Looking back, Record recalled, "The Lincoln team stayed across from us in the hotel. They were nice people. I kind of felt bad about beating them so bad."[17]

After the first game, Record's team beat a team from Ogden, Utah, and then played the Logan Fifth and Eighteenth Ward. (The wards combined for basketball and other MIA activities because there were very few teenagers in the wards.) That Logan team had a player who was going to BYU. He was dating a woman from Record's ward, so they found out he was ineligible to play. Record recalled, "We blew the whistle on it as soon as we found." Since the Logan team lost one of its stars, they were "kind of mad obviously. They were playing pretty rough to put it mildly." One tried to take a ball from the best player on Record's team and "literally tackled him. . . . He knocked him to the ground and literally ground his face into the court." The referee called traveling. "Figure that one," Record commented. The player left the game and had stitches. He returned to the game but "one of the stitches was pulling his eye a little bit, so he couldn't see quite straight." Despite all the problems, Record's team lost by one point.[18]

There are always two sides to every story. Bruce Dickerson from Logan remembered the incident from another point of view. A BYU freshman football player came home twice a month so he could still play on the Logan Fifth and Eighteenth Ward team. Church leaders still declared the BYU student ineligible since he did not currently reside with his parents in the ward boundaries. So the Logan team played at the all-church tournament without the football player. The Logan team lost to West Jordan and their 6' 5" twins in the final game. Dickerson's team was unhappy and "made a stink about this whole thing. Our ward, our stake, our region, and everybody was going after the Church making a stink about it. " While "making a stink" did not change the outcome, according to Dickerson, church leaders may have not wanted to deal with such concerns. "I think

that's part of the reason they [the church leaders] gave up all-church. It got out of control." Dickerson added the negative impact of the decision. "This young man is not in the Church today because of that. He didn't go on a mission. He's not active, and he's not a member of the Church. It just ruined his whole attitude about the gospel. He couldn't separate the gospel and the Church because they wouldn't let him play."[19]

Changes with Officials

Those involved with the games complained about the rules and officials. But there were other concerns as well. Richard Ball who directed the all-church basketball tournament and officiated at the games said that a major problem occurred when the Church stopped paying officials. Ball recalled that the church games were a training program for beginning officials. Eventually the officials decided they did not receive enough pay and asked for a raise. Ball told them that if they asked for more money the Church would eliminate any pay–and that happened. As a result the officials that were willing to work for free as a church calling often lacked training. And if the players sensed the officials did not know the game, they played rougher.[20]

Ray Hale, who grew up in Salt Lake City playing sports and then served on the softball and volleyball YMMIA committees, discussed the changes with the officials. As a professional official for college football and basketball, he continued to help after he left the committee. He recalled, "I heard some rumors" from one of the church committee members that the Church "didn't want to pay certified officials to referee the games. . . . I think the problem was they figured it was too much money." The committee members suggested training people in the wards to be officials. As a professional, Hale agreed to help and put on clinics for the volunteers. Still Hale complained, "it was hard to get the caliber of guys that were paid referees. It never seemed to click."[21]

Kenneth Erickson who also grew up in Salt Lake City played in all-church and became a professional volleyball official. He recalled the officials on the local level were paid, although the

fee was "very nominal." He continued, "I don't remember the years, but I was involved with that when we went to nonpaying referees." The Church conducted clinics, and Erickson taught a four-hour Saturday clinic with demonstrations and a two-hour Tuesday clinic. He commented though that it was harder to referee church volleyball. The players did not know the rules and they were not as skilled as professionals.[22]

The Larger Mormon Picture

But all-church tournaments did not end in a vacuum. The change came as church leaders changed their focus from auxiliaries to the priesthood in the 1970s. Similar to the correlation movement in the early twentieth century (discussed in chapter 2), General Authorities, under the direction of Elder Harold B. Lee, focused on priesthood direction. As Allen and Leonard explained, "Auxiliary organizations were in reality only helps to the priesthood in carrying out its proper function."[23] Eliminating all-church programs was the first step. Further changes came when Church President Harold B. Lee released the 120 members of the YMMIA and YWMIA General Boards following June Conference in 1973. Lee announced the MIA would now be supervised by priesthood leaders, so there was no longer a need for the board. Board member Owen Rich felt "a good relief to be released from all the many responsibilities" but he also felt a sense of loss because he would no longer be involved in planning and he would miss the association with the board members.[24]

Presiding Bishop Victor L. Brown explained the new program in the general priesthood session of general conference on April 7, 1973. He referred to the First Presidency's announcement that created the Melchizedek Priesthood MIA and the Aaronic Priesthood MIA. Brown's office would direct the church-wide MIA. On the local level, the bishopric would be in charge of the young men. Four adult women leaders, a president and an advisor for the Beehive, Mia Maid, and Laurel classes, directed the Young Women. A service and activity committee would plan service and

dance, drama, sports, and athletic programs for the ward, and a special effort would be made to include service activities. Teenagers would direct a local ward youth council. June Conference became a priesthood conference.[25]

The reorganization was only the beginning of changes. In 1971 when YMMIA Superintendent W. Jay Eldredge announced the end of the "massive staged cultural events" at June Conference, he said there would still be a June conference.[26] But four years later that changed. At the 1975 June Conference, Church President Spencer W. Kimball announced that would be the last annual meeting. The Church planned to "decentralize" to "meet the increased challenges of a world wide organization" because of "the impracticality of concentrating our activities and learning processes in the headquarters center only." A *New Era* article about the final conference concluded, "With determination to continue 'lengthening our stride' [a popular Kimball slogan], visitors and young people participating . . . left with recollections of emphasizing proud heritages, strong youth program, and a worldwide organization geared to take the gospel to all people."[27] The focus was not just on the youth. The Primary, Sunday School, and Relief Society also eliminated their annual conferences after 1975. Two years later all cultural arts and athletic activities moved from the Young Men and Young Women programs to ward activity committees.[28]

The same conference stressed the need for all members to be involved in physical fitness. Elder Marion D. Hanks, then an assistant to the Twelve, explained, "It is our purpose to continue to emphasize and strongly support competitive athletics on a ward, stake, region, and area basis throughout the Church." But he emphasized that "athletic competition in the Church involves relatively few members." With a belief "that we should do better," he encouraged wards and branches to include "the entire ward family in wholesome activities." Everyone could participate: children, singles, married, divorced, and widowed, "the active and the less active." These programs "would recreate and regenerate" and "bring rich social and physical and spiritual benefits to those

involved."[29]

Regional Activities

The athletic and cultural focus moved from the all-church to regional tournaments. Catholic sociologist Thomas O'Dea expects this shift to take place in 1957. "The Mormon movement is on the eve of its Diaspora" where "belongingness would no longer be exclusively identified with a specific place."[30] Mormon sociologist Armand L. Mauss reports on the church center in 1994. "Church members might think of Utah as the Rome or Mecca of their faith, but they do not identify with it as strongly as in earlier stages." Instead members looked at their own temple or their hope for one and focused on the church in their area. As a result, "each cultural community could adapt and embroider the core in accordance with its own needs." [31]

Regional activities reflected this change. Mel Jones, the director of church sports in the Southwest Area, remembered when church leaders decided to discontinue all-church, they told him, "Brother Jones, we want you to go back to Arizona and build a program that will make them forget Salt Lake City finals." Jones set up regional programs, including a slow-pitch tournament in Prescott, Arizona. All the teams could play for five days, and people planned their vacations around the tournaments just as they had the all-church tournament.

Impact of Regional Church Sports

Ryan and Kacy Hastings, students in a BYU LDS sports and recreation class during fall semester 2005, reported major differences in the Merced-Fresno, California, area–once a hotbed for church softball–between all-church and regional play. First, fewer people participated. Second, the boys did not practice as much. Third, church leaders no longer announced their progress in priesthood meeting. Fourth, the quality of play went down, so many boys did not want to participate. Jordan Cutts, who grew up in Fresno during the 1990s said ward softball was "more like sand ball." Wayne Hunter, who played softball before and after the all-church tournaments, said that teams from

Merced no longer came to Fresno to play. And the teams that remained did not have uniforms. Hunter stopped playing because softball became "just a fun thing" and not a way to learn leadership skills. With the change in participation, the Hastings' second observation was a reduced level of competition. Slow pitch was not as competitive to many as fast pitch. More people could play with slow pitch, but those who really played to win stopped participating.[32]

Despite these changes, softball still helped with conversions and reactivations to the Church. Doug Cutts, Kacy's father, was an example. Doug's wife Melynda was a member but Doug was not. The men in Melynda's ward invited Doug to play church basketball and softball. He enjoyed softball and sometimes played four hours a week. He explained, "Softball played a big part in my conversion to the Church." He made friends and wanted to be like them. He appreciated the noncompetitive games because he saw few major disagreements.[33]

Stan Lambourne and his wife were inactive when they lived in San Francisco. When they moved to Fresno, Lambourne's home teacher invited him to play church softball. He liked the relaxed games and made friends. As a result, he and his family attended church meetings. Lambourne then used church softball to bring more members back to the Church.[34]

These examples would not be convincing to those who played softball in the Merced area during the 1960s. For Mark Hutchings, who grew up in the area, eliminating all-church tournaments meant "there was [not] nearly the emphasis on winning. I was quite disappointed because it had been such a big part of my life. I always liked the idea that we had a chance to go to all-church." Not all former players agreed. Larry B. McGee felt, "The Church just matured out of [all-church]. Frankly people can get the same benefit probably from just going to a regional tournament or stake tournament."[35]

Local Decisions on Stake and Regional Play

Eventually the regional tournaments ended in some places. Mel Jones who had been so

involved in Arizona guessed why. He believed the program "diminished at the request of church leaders because there was so much emphasis on the sports program that it was detracting somewhat from family life and there was still a lot of recruiting going on to get big players in certain wards. Everything was considered, so finally the program was scaled back." Jones said that this happened after he was released so he was not sure all of the reasoning. "I'm sure it was because the regional church leaders, the stake presidents and the region people determined to scale it back."[36]

The same thing happened in other places. Greg Davis took part in basketball stake competition in Washington state and then went to a regional or multi-regional tournament in the Tri-Cities area. "I think 1980 was the last year we were playing our bi-regional basketball tournament up in Cheney, Washington, just a little bit south of Spokane. It was quite a trip for us, quite an adventure." The games provided a "good chance to be with friends and meet other members of the Church." Despite competition and everyone wanting to win, "we never left whether we had won or lost feeling bad about a person on the other team or hating them because we would see them every year. They were the guys we grew up with whether they lived fifty miles away or a hundred miles away."[37]

General church leaders controlled all-church tournaments; it was a program administered from the top down. With the elimination of the all-church programs, local leaders supervised regional tournaments. As Mel Jones explained, these leaders decided whether they should have regional or even local activities. Eventually the tournaments ended in Arizona. Some stakes completely stopped playing softball there. The same thing happened in Washington state.

But not every area completely eliminated sports. Kenneth Erickson, who grew up playing sports in and out of the Church and who worked as a volleyball referee, was called to the Utah area committee in 1972 after all-church sports ended. He helped with tournaments for all sports and especially focused on assigning officials. Erickson was released after three years, but he continued

to help run the tournaments. He was also the volleyball specialist for the area, and he continued to do that in 2003. In that position, Erickson refereed and trained coaches and referees. He joked, "Maybe when I get it right, they'll release me."[38]

Consolidated Meeting Schedule

A number of factors affected the change. One was when church leaders announced a consolidated meeting schedule in March 1980. Several stakes had experimented with a three-hour block of meetings on Sunday, and church leaders decided to implement it churchwide. So instead of the meetings spread out all day on Sunday and many weekend activities, most of the church programs took place on Sunday. Some things remained the same. Young men still did scouting and "usually" had a weekday activity. But the focus was to be on the priesthood. Young women could have weekday programs such as standard nights and teaching experiences. But "activities that are for entertainment only should be avoided." Combined activities with young men and women were encouraged at least once a month but not more than twice a month. The focus was on family activities on a ward activity day. While sports were allowed, they were also to be during ward activity days "whenever possible." The family and the ward became the focus. "Regional and area youth activities, which should be infrequent, are planned only at the invitation of the stake presidents." They were also to be scheduled so they did not interrupt family time.[39] All of these instructions were left open so that wards and stakes could determine their own policies.

Adaption of the New Program

The focus, as Mel Jones expected, became more family oriented. But church leaders still encouraged sports and recreation. In 1979, before the new schedule, N. Eldon Tanner, who served in the Church's First Presidency, talked about Mormonism as "a practical religion" that helped "people . . . find happiness and an inner peace" and "cope with problems and trials." One way was through "wholesome recreation and activity," including "camping, sports, drama, dance, music,

cultural arts, and physical fitness."[40] In 1988, after eight years on the new consolidated schedule, Thomas S. Monson, a member of the First Presidency, elaborated, "Church sports activities have a unique central purpose much higher than the development of physical prowess, or even victory itself. It is to strengthen faith, build integrity, and develop in each participant the attributes of his maker."[41]

The elimination of the YMMIA and the creation of the Young Men program also influenced programs. In 1982, Robert Backman, a member of the Seventy and Young Men president, encouraged athletics as a way to convert and bring inactive young men back to church. He emphasized, however, "That doesn't mean unsupervised basketball on activity night." But the sports could be "basketball, softball, volleyball, soccer, wrestling, boxing, cycling, swimming, tiddledywinks." Those who did not play sports, who "march[ed] to the beat of a different drum," could be involved in other activities. After telling a story about how drama affected a young man who became a university theater professor, Backman said that wards should not eliminate the "cultural arts," even though there was not a churchwide program. He encouraged wards to focus on dance, drama, and speech.[42]

The new program moved what had been Young Men and Young Women Mutual Improvement Association activities to ward activity committees. In 1983 Kathleen Lubeck explains the variety of programs in an *Ensign* article, "Activities That Change Lives." She asks, "What has thousands of legs and is found in climes around the world jogging, clogging, Ping-Ponging, singing, acting, stomping, and serving others?' She responds, "Church members participating in Church-sponsored activities–a delightful alternative to undesirable activities often found outside the Church." Her reasons for taking part in these programs were very similar to the ones that the recreation program started with. "These activities . . . provide a fun way to do missionary work, reactivate Church members, and develop self-esteem and talents at the same time."[43]

Then Lubeck tells of a family Ping-Pong tournament in Nagoya, Japan, an oral history project to document the conversion stories of members of the North Hollywood Third Ward, a play *Zion* presented in Rome, Italy, and a "Mormon Marathon" in Hawaii. She explains that the focus on family activities meant that "dance festivals and road shows . . . now sponsored by the activities committees . . . give families a great opportunity to work together." The entire family could take part in a dramatic production or a dance. Families also took part in a Church Physical Fitness Awards Program. The success of these programs mirrored the all-church tournament days. According to Rulon Cummings, the chair of the Clearfield Utah Stake activities committee, "Last year alone, seven young men were baptized in the Church because of our stake sports program. . . . Eight sisters and seventeen brothers became active because of the mixed volleyball and softball programs."[44]

Optional Regional Tournaments

While regional tournaments were still possible, some areas completely eliminated them. But with more community and school sports, some wards had trouble convincing members to play church ball. For example, Mark Hutchings explained that in Provo, Utah, most boys played school sports. While his father wanted him to play church ball, Mark did not emphasize it for his sons and daughters.[45] Mel Jones also believed the focus shifted. While "in some stakes, they don't hardly have any play," he said, "they're doing other things, so they're keeping the youth entertained." The youth played on city teams more than church teams.[46]

Other wards, stakes, and regions had negative experiences, so church leaders decided to eliminate athletics. After explaining that church sports provided an opportunity for young people who did not play school sports, Boyd Jarman said that purpose disappeared. "I think the thing that killed [church sports] was the excessive emphasis on competition and winning." As a result, Jarman explained, "I was part of a stake presidency that just said to the people in our stake, 'This is not working, and we will not do it anymore.' We just stopped sports activities for the men." He agreed

with the interviewer that it was a "controversial move" and there was "opposition." But he justified the decision: "At one of the last games there were two elders' quorum presidents on the floor wrestling over a call. What do you accomplish? There's a time for things, and there's a time to end things."[47]

Those who continued to play sports often did so on only a local level and focused on spirituality. During the 1980s tempers flared at a basketball game in Sparks, Nevada. Consequently, stake leaders decided to examine church sports more closely. By giving teams priesthood names (Sparks Fifth Deacons), starting and ending games with prayer, reminding participants that the cultural hall was in a dedicated place of worship, insisting that eligibility included church attendance requirements, and occasionally changing the makeup of the teams and eliminating scores, the stake hoped to encourage sports. They wanted to do as Brigham Young suggested, "Get to Zion, but . . . [not] drag Babylon along with us."[48]

Several factors led to the end of stake and regional sports in the Provo South Stake. First, cost was a consideration. Very few wards and stakes had softball fields, so the stakes had to rent community facilities. The cost became more than the local church leaders in the Provo South Stake wanted to pay. Even if they could have covered the cost, there was the additional problem of finding time to use the fields when so many business and city leagues also played.

Second, time was a problem in church-owned facilities. The Church moved from each ward having its own building to usually three wards sharing the space. On weekday evenings and Saturdays, youth and adult groups tried to schedule the building. On the one night designated for stake sports, the men and women often disagreed who should use the gymnasium. When other groups scheduled the building, sometimes the athletes immediately moved on to the floor as those attending a meeting attempted to clean up. Some players even felt that they should use the gym all night.

Third, lack of interest was another concern. As men and women became involved in many activities, few had time to take part in church sports. The Charles Redd Center interviewees tell stories about how their lives revolved around church sports. They would never dream of missing a game. But in a rushed world full of meetings and all types of recreational activities, often not enough players showed up for a game.

Fourth, there were major problems with sportsmanship. Some church leaders were encouraged *not* to play church sports because they became too emotional and physical during the games. These increased problems reached a climax when some players disagreed with a call during a women's regional volleyball game. The players questioned the call; the fans got involved. Some of the fans even followed players from the opponent's team home. After this final event, the stake president announced that the wards under his control would no longer participate in region sports.[49]

Why was there such poor sportsmanship? From a strictly athletic view, being good sports was no longer the emphasis. Examples from my experience as a fan show some of the change. When I was in high school, fans sat quietly when their team or the opposing team shot field throws; the gym was so quiet it was almost eerie. But that sense of showing respect for the other team disappeared over the years. In professional basketball, fans started waving tubes to disturb the player who was shooting. Basketball players were required to raise their hand when they fouled and were given technical fouls if they complained too much. Complaining and not accepting a foul became common practice first in the National Basketball Association and then in college and community sports. These "bad boys" of basketball were heroes, and young players often followed the bad examples.

These examples occurred in the 1980s. My BYU students in 2007 shared some of their experiences in the 1990s and early 2000s. When I asked them for comments about their church sports experiences, I got very mixed reactions. Some loved the experience. Students in my LDS

sports and recreation class even chose to write their finals in the form of letters to the General Authorities about why they should bring back an all-church tournament. The major argument was the need for a sense of community among Mormon boys. Students in my American Studies class told of their experiences that represented the best and the worst of church ball. Several examples show the variety of experiences.

Liesl Christensen, who grew up in the Olympic Fifth Ward in Salt Lake City, loved church sports. They referred to their team as "Team Spandex," since everyone wore spandex shorts under their regular shorts–"the brighter the better." Girls who did not often come to church came to play sports and became friends with those who attended meetings regularly. The team was good; it won the regional tournaments several times. But the main goal was to have "a bunch of fun." No one got really upset if "somebody messed up." Instead "we just laughed and kept on playing. It was a perfect place for girls to come and be hyper and have fun." Christensen concluded, "I loved [playing church sports] and would do it again if I had the chance."[50]

Jake Davis, who grew up in the Alpine Stake in northern Utah County, also enjoyed his sporting experiences, especially "multi-ward basketball tournaments." While the stake sponsored baseball and flag football, they were more like pickup games. For the basketball tournaments, "there was a clear organization and system in place with clear scheduling and officiating." He also liked it because his ward did well. "Pardon the ego for a second, but my ward was always in competition for the title. We won the tournament twice and took second once."[51]

Not all the students' experiences were positive though. John Brumbaugh, who grew up in Libby, Montana, enjoyed playing basketball with his friends. They traveled to Bonners Ferry, Idaho, for a one-day tournament, and since the team had played together "winning the tournament was not much of a challenge." Brumbaugh sometimes was concerned about the lack of sportsmanship by players and fans. "Physically it got out of hand a couple of times," Brumbaugh said. He told of a

time when an opponent tackled his nonmember friend Tim. "I can still remember Tim's body parallel to the gym floor and his wrinkled forehead as he pulled his body off the ground. Church basketball is a tough sport."

Brumbaugh remembered a stake tournament game where he and the opposing guard "were going at it throughout the game." In the second half, Brumbaugh's father "got mad at the other guard and started yelling at him every time he got the ball." There were only twenty people in the gym so everyone heard his dad yelling "hot dog" and "show boat"at the guard. Brumbaugh continued, "I finally had to do something when my dad yelled at me, 'John, you can take him. He does not have anything.' I stopped playing and turned to my dad and told him, 'Shut up! We are trying to play a game.'" Brumbaugh recalled, "After the game the hour drive back home was in deathly silence."[52]

Sara Manning played high school basketball so she did not play with her Young Women until she quit the school team her senior year. That year the church team made it to the second round in a tournament but only because Manning scored most of the points. She summarized, "So my experience with church sports was kind of bad. I would have rather played with people who knew how to play well." But mainly she tired of playing in basketball after participating for so many years.[53]

Cynthia Clark, a middle-age returning student, explained that her only experience with church sports was watching her five sons play. She asked them to send me their comments. They matched Brumbaugh's and Manning's experiences. Clark's son Andrew wrote, "When it is organized and the elders are matched up against another team in the stake it tends to bring the worse out in people." Rather than creating "brotherhood," the game created "competitive juices . . . in the form of pushing, taunting, arguing calls, and coming back on lesser teammates." Her son Steve called church ball "the best of times, the worst of times." Although the game started with a prayer, it was "the most insignificant, unholy, over recited insincere, full of B.S. prayer." The player

"mumbles something about good sportsmanship, no harm or accident" while the players eye each other and decide how they will hit the other players or complain if they don't get playing time. He recalled a time when a bishop was asked to leave a game because of his constant complaints. In response, he walked on to the floor, said "That's my ball," took it and left. The game ended for lack of a ball.[54]

So depending on where Mormons lived, church sports continued to be important or were discontinued because of problems. There was no longer an all-church program so individual wards, stakes, and regions could make their own decisions. While there was not a program for everyone, there were attempts to include sports and recreation on a one-time basis.

Does that mean that Mormons stopped playing sports? By all means, no. Teenage boys and adult men still gather in their local meeting houses and play pickup games. One student argued that the intramural program at Brigham Young University served the same purpose as church tournaments to bring college students together to share experiences and relieve tension. When Ricks College, a church-owned junior college in Rexburg, Idaho, became a four-year university, church leaders eliminated competitive sports on the junior college level. Rather than moving Brigham Young University-Idaho into university-status sports, the leaders expanded university-wide sports and cultural activities and encouraged all students to take part.

Another program which helped young people come together was an Especially for Youth (EFY) program where teenagers gather to share cultural and testimony-building experiences. Similar to the Spectacular program sponsored by the Community of Christ (see chapter 1), the EFY program is an an opportunity for Latter-day Saint youth to meet and mingle. The goal is to help those who participate "come unto Christ."[55]

The first Especially for Youth was held at Brigham Young University in 1976 when one hundred seventy-two youth and fifteen counselors met. One year later over eight hundred teenagers

took part. In 2006 the first meetings were held outside of North America in England and Germany. Since 1982 the conference has had a yearly theme. The program is set for all EFY and includes dances, workshops, parties, variety shows, and testimony meetings. Participants pay a fee for the continuing education program. While the organization is very different, the EFY activities provide a chance for Mormon teenagers to gather together and meet people from throughout the church just as the all-church athletic tournaments and dance festivals did until 1971. Just as BYU intramurals provide a place for students who play sports, EFY allows youth to see they are not alone.

Ad Hoc Programs

Other examples of one-time activities were regional conferences in the 1970s. With the growth of the Church, General Authorities recognized that they needed to go to meet church members since most could no longer attend general conference or participate in all-church programs. Leaders planned regional conferences where selected General Authorities traveled to an area and all the local stakes attended. These one-time conferences included more than just worship services. There were always cultural events and occasionally sports.

Cultural Events

In 1975 during the last June Conference, church leaders sponsored a "lavish Heritage Arts Festival that encouraged [participants] to 'remember the past to better the future.'" This festival "was intended to stimulate similar activities to be held in stakes and regions throughout the Church this year and next." The project was very large with "displays, dramatizations, films, historic tours, concerts, and musicals spread throughout the city." The festival even included a musical "Title of Liberty," which American wards could use for the Bicentennial of the United States' Independence.[56] While there was not a focus on Heritage Arts Festivals after 1976, some regions continued to have productions. For example, in 1985, thirteen thousand church members performed before a crowd of one hundred thousand in a southern California dance festival.[57]

Area Conference Cultural Events

Church President Joseph Fielding Smith held the first area conference in England in 1971. It included a cultural evening. "Long skirted ladies and men in black filled the ballroom of the Cumberland Suite at Belle Vue. A 13-piece orchestra played the quiet danceable tunes along with an occasional 'March of the Mod,' which results in a happy, highly active group dancing." A floorshow included "a program that was highly representative of Britain and its cultures." A drama "House Talk" "had a special British flavor and was received with emotion and interest."[58]

In 1972, Church President Harold B. Lee presided over a conference in Mexico City. According to the *Ensign*, "The conference began Friday evening. The glory of the Mexican people was shown in two hours of song and dance as 764 performers presented a breathtaking performance before some 15,000 warmly receptive Saints." The presentation included Aztec dances and folk songs from throughout Mexico. A twenty-one-year-old dance director, Jose Layte traveled over two thousand miles in the Veracruz area to teach dances. The Saturday before the performance they practiced for ten hours. A one-hundred-fifty-member choir from the Mexico Southeast Mission practiced twice a week in their branches and then at three all-day practices.[59]

In 1973 a German area conference included cultural and sports activities. On Friday afternoon youth participated in volleyball and table tennis competitions. For the evening production the area authorities divided the invited European countries into regions and gave each ten minutes. The youth were excited to participate and gave the conference a name OCOS–One Church, One Spirit.[60]

Spencer W. Kimball attended a Scandinavian Area Conference in Stockholm, Sweden in 1974. The *Ensign* declared, "The Friday cultural event–Festspel–served as a vehicle for giving a remarkable thrust to the conference and a seal of unity for the Saints of the four lands." Each country had fifteen minutes to give a program "reflecting its cultural heritage." The representatives from

Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland entered the stadium with flags. They sang all the countries' national anthems. For the finale everyone sang "Landkjenning" ("Discovery") in Norwegian. The Danes, Swedes, and Finns "struggled and practiced to learn a song in a tongue not native to them. But when they gathered together Friday evening, it was as if they had sung all their lives together." Ramm Arvesether, the seventy-three-year-old conductor, was thrilled that the song brought groups often divided together. He declared, "It was a special good feeling for me to lead the chorus, to lead the symbol of unity that we needed to have."[61]

In 1975 Kimball attended area conferences in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Buenos Aires, Argentina. The *Ensign* reported, "The format for both conferences was the same. On Friday evening the members presented a program of songs and dances that depicted local cultures." These programs helped the youth meet other members at rehearsals. "As a result there were some deep friendships that developed, and there were even some engagements." The actual performances "did much to stimulate a feeling of unity among members who came from regions and countries hundreds of miles apart. Each group seemed to gain more appreciation for the others' unique talents and cultural heritage." Television stations in Brazil reported the event, and the crews asked, "Where have you been keeping these choirs?" The *Ensign* article continued, "Of course, the answer was that the choirs . . . had not existed until the people arrived in Sao Paulo."[62]

Other activities also included performances. At the Expo '74 fair in Spokane, Washington two thousand dancers, singers, and performers from twenty-one stakes performed. They traveled long distances to practice and perform, but in the end they declared it was all worth it. A highlight was church president Kimball speaking at a special devotional for the participants. In addition, the group met new people and learned new missionary techniques.[63]

Initially area conferences were not held in the United States and Canada. Church leaders saw them as a way to reach out to Latter-day Saints who were far from church headquarters. In May

1978 Church President Spencer W. Kimball outlined plans for North America meetings as well at a regional representative seminar. Kimball explained, "We meet together often in the Church in conferences to worship the Lord, to feast upon the word of Christ, and to be built up in faith. . . . In recent years some of the most inspirational conferences have been the area conferences held outside the United States. We plan, beginning in 1979, to hold some area conferences in the United States. Through these area conferences more members of the Church will be able to meet and hear the General Authorities."[64] Of the ten area conferences held during the last half of 1979, five were in the United States and one was in Canada.[65]

The international area conferences included cultural programs with local songs and dances. These were followed by worship meetings for mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and the general membership. The reports of the Houston conference in June 1979 and the Los Angeles conference in May 1980 included excerpts from the General Authorities' talk but did not mention a cultural program. The area conferences in North America were similar to General Conference and focused on talks and not performances.[66]

In 1975 President Kimball called these conferences "a great new adventure in taking the whole program of the Church out to the people of the whole world." The concept was good, but it came at the time when church leaders were simplifying and cutting back on the meetings they attended. At the same time that Kimball announced plans for area conferences in North America, he explained that stake conferences would be held only twice a year instead of quarterly and General Authorities would only attend one conference. As part of that program, the church leaders replaced the area conferences with "smaller-scale regional [multistake] conferences." According to historians James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, "Many who attended [the area conferences] had saved for months, sometimes at great personal sacrifice, to share the spiritual richness of the occasion." Eliminating area conferences also saved time and money for these members.[67]

Return to the Past

Although all-church activities ended, sports and recreation programs never completely disappeared in the Church. Wards and stakes were free to adapt programs that fit their needs. Programs similar to those that the 1983 *Ensign* article explained were held throughout the world. However, they were not as organized or as frequent as they had been in the past. In 2004 that changed. The First Presidency sent a letter to all local leaders asking for stake and multistake functions of "music, dance, drama, speech, sports, [and] visual arts." The leaders explained that these would create "a sense of unity and opportunities to develop friendships, especially among the youth."[68]

To show how this could be done, the First Presidency asked people to work together and develop programs in connection with temple dedications. On January 10, 2004, for example, two thousand young people in African costumes performed at the Accra Ghana Temple dedication. The next month six hundred church members portrayed Alaska's native culture at the Anchorage Temple rededication. The same month eight thousand local members and twelve hundred missionaries performed in the rain for audiences of sixty thousand in Sao Paulo. The youth performances associated with temple dedications continued that year in Denmark and New York City.[69]

In 2005 "Day of Rejoicing" was the cultural event for the Aba, Nigeria Temple. Sister Diane Clements, a Church Educational System missionary, explained, "It's a chance for the youth to get together and have fun. For the Nigerian youth, it's been a wonderful opportunity to revise these traditional dance customs."[70] A cultural event at the Newport Beach, Califonia Temple had the same affect. The youth performed "A Sacred Place" in a large Orange County arena. Joseph I. Bentley, chair of the Temple Youth Celebration Committee, explained that the event inspired the youth to work toward attending the temple later in life. The practices started in May for the September event. The six hundred participants donated one hundred thousand hours.[71]

The year 2005 was also another anniversary in the LDS Church. Members celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth, and church leaders asked youth to prepare programs to remember Smith's life. Wards held cultural nights. Selected participants appeared at a stake presentation. Some of these went to regional activities. The *Church News* reported events in Utah during July and August

- 58,000 attended two pageants at the Dee Events Center at Weber State University.
- 11,000 in Cedar City participated in a program including displays of art.
- 42,000 youth from the Salt Lake area participated on a local level. Many attended the "Day of Celebration" at the Rice Eccles Stadium at the University of Utah. Ten thousand sang in a choir. Church President Gordon B. Hinckley attended and declared, "What a show."
- 25,000 attended in Logan at the Utah State University Romney Stadium.
- 55,000 people attended three performances of "A Generation of Promise: Remembering the Prophet Joseph Smith" in the Marriott Center at Brigham Young University and saw a performance of music and dance.[72]

The festivals also took place elsewhere. On July 23, fourteen stakes in the Vancouver, Washington, area performed "O Come Ye Nations of the Earth." The dance festival included eight hundred youth dancers, one hundred Primary children, and the BYU Ballroom Dance Team. Nearly eight thousand people attended the afternoon and evening performances in the McKenzie Stadium. Two local newspapers reported the event.[73]

R. Christine Ollerton, a BYU dance instructor, grew up in an inactive Mormon home. Similar cultural activities helped her become an active member. She was disappointed when the cultural activities disappeared, but she felt they were coming back because of church president Gordon B. Hinckley. "I think he and the others realized something is missing. We've got to fill these young people's lives with the arts and with wonderful things to create and do. It also helps them to build

self esteem, to feel of worth."[74]

Of course, sports and cultural activities never completely disappeared in the LDS Church. For example, in 2003, Bob Armstrong, the stake physical activity director in the Modesto, California, North Stake, described the MBA (Mormon Basketball Association) in that area. The motto for the association was "You Make the Difference! Have Fun, Play Hard, Bring a Friend and Remember Sportsmanship–Always!" Nearly three hundred men and two hundred-fifty young men participated each year. Fans who attended the games ranged in age from fifteen to one hundred, with the young men drawing the largest crowds with parents and friends. But many enjoyed watching bishops and other ward leaders play. Armstrong estimated they had three to eight baptisms a year from sports. In the Hayward Stake where Armstrong lived, three of five bishops and the stake president had all joined the Church because of sports.[75]

After 2004 local leaders developed more youth activities. Wards and stakes in Orem, Utah, planned dance and speech festivals. Youth choirs are especially important in one stake, and nearly all the teenagers participate. While the Provo South Stake stopped participating in regional sports in the 1980s, in 2007 the region reintroduced a regional volleyball tournament. In November 2007, the Provo South Stake scheduled open court volleyball play. The announcement offered skills and rules instructions and encouraged all teenagers and adult women to participate. Participants in the stake play could take part in a regional tournament that was held between December 1 and 8, 2007.

This tournament was part of a larger program that started in the Utah South Area in 2004. According to Kathleen Carlile, the Utah South Area Women's Sports Director, that year Merrill C. Bateman, a General Authority assigned to supervise the area from Alpine, Utah to St. George, Utah, asked that the stakes and regions initiate a sports program for teenagers and adults. Carlile continued, "Since that time, we have been working on developing the program following the priesthood direction given." She continued that like "all auxiliaries and programs in the church [the

sports program] focus[es] on the mission of the church in bringing souls to Christ."[76]

Barbara Shurtleff, the regional sports director in Orem, Utah, worked under the direction of Carlile. She explained how the program worked in Orem. While there were eleven stakes in her region, only four had women's teams and only two played in the tournament. Shurtleff explained, "We have some stakes that do not have much participation because of past experiences." However, she saw changes, "I have seen my own bishop slowly become more accepting over the last few years." Shurtleff was grateful for area support. "We have been learning and growing with the help of our area leaders." Each game started with a devotional and prayer. Shurtleff stressed sportsmanship with the players, coaches, and fans even though a fan who was out of control called Shurtleff "the Gestapo."[77]

All of these programs were part of the Utah Area Sports who maintained a webpage and sponsored seven sport: basketball, dodgeball, flag football, futsal (a game similar to soccer that could be played indoor on a basketball court or a small field outside), golf, softball, and volleyball. The webpage included guidelines, rules, and purposes for sports. It stressed, "Church activities should strengthen testimonies and foster personal growth. They also should provide opportunities to apply gospel principles and help participants develop friendships in a wholesome environment." The sports program was to help bring people together for the same reasons that it did in the past.[78]

Ron Gerber supervised the Utah Area Sports. As with the all-church tournaments, his programs emphasized spiritual aspects. He used a quote from President Ezra Taft Benson, "Sportsmanship is first tried in sports. The athletic program is a spiritual program. If it weren't, we wouldn't continue it. We're interested in being about men and women of character and integrity." To emphasis that, Gerber had the Young Men, Young Women, Relief Society, and Priesthood groups recite their theme and start with a prayer. He provided posters that had a picture of Christ and the organizational themes. According to Gerber, "It's made a difference. We don't have as much

craziness as we once had." Gerber also worked to teach basketball rules to coaches, players, and officials.[79]

Gerber agreed sports were not emphasized as much after the 1970s. For example, teams were not recognized in sacrament meeting. Still, in the Northern Utah area more than two thousand wards participated in thirty-six tournaments in 2004. More tournaments meant more teams participated. Some leaders were very supportive. A stake president from Tremonton, Utah, handed out the award if a team from his stake won. He talked to stake members on how sports can be used to "fellowship and activate" families.[80]

Gerber also explained the tournament no longer gave sportsmanship awards because they did not want to reward people for doing what they should do and because they were not sure how to select the winner. In 1950, Gerber was on a team at the all-church tournament that won second place for sportsmanship in 1950, but he is not sure they were the best sports. Maybe it was a second place award.[81] So even after all-church programs changed in 1971, Gerber and others saw reasons for continuing sports and recreation in the LDS Church.

Summary

While cultural events continue on an ad hoc basis (usually at temple dedications), large-scale sports that involve the entire church do not happen. Mormon men and boys still continue to play basketball, but with little supervision it often is a brawl with a prayer. There are several reasons. The Church might not stress sports as much because the competition might not produce the reverence that General Authorities want to create. In 1977, Church leaders recommended that wards take the trophy cases out of the foyers because they took away from the quiet space the leaders wanted in the meeting house area.[82]

Another reason is there has been a shift in focus from the cultural to the spiritual in the Mormon Church. Sociologist Armand L. Mauss refers to this change in his book *The Angel and the*

Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation. Mauss starts out by describing the conflict between two symbols in downtown Salt Lake City, the Angel Moroni on the temple and the beehive on the Joseph Smith Memorial Building (formerly the Hotel Utah). For Mauss, the angel represents the spiritual and the beehive the more secular cultural elements of Mormonism. For years Mormons focused on the beehive and assimilating into the American culture. However, Mauss saw a shift more toward the angel and less concern with the beehive about the same time that the all-church activities ended.[83]

According to Thomas F. O'Dea, the Church was moving in that direction in 1957. He writes that to survive, the LDS Church and other religions should deal with "deeper human problems" such as "understanding . . . the problem of God and man." He sees Mormonism moving in that direction in the 1950s but adds, "Only in the field of recreation has Mormonism been able to meet the challenge" of dealing with "worldly spheres." Even recreation might need to be eliminated because government and secular groups could promote it better than religion.[84]

Armand L. Mauss sees these changes taking place. He discusses how the Church moved from its "extensive education programs" including the MIA youth activities to a focus on the spiritual elements. As Mauss writes, "Gone are the . . . competitions provided by the old MIA." In their place were "priesthood correlation and youth temple trips." Mauss sees these changes as positive. "This spiritual core would link Mormon communities around the world into one universal religion." He continues, "If the Mormon Church is to become truly a new world religion in the 21st century, as some scholars have projected, the angel will have to be largely disengaged from the American beehive" so that the Church can create new cultural beehives in other places.[85]

Still, members of the Church view life as a complete adventure. Taking part in sports and recreation activities has been an important way to put the gospel into practice. The all-church tournaments and June Conference provide a valuable window into some activities that the Church

provided for teenagers during two-thirds of the twentieth century. Athletic and cultural events were never part of worship, but they were important activities that brought church members and others in connection with each other and helped develop a sense of community. Whether they played team sports like basketball, softball, and volleyball, participated in individual sports like tennis and golf, or danced, young Latter-day Saints in the twentieth century learned how to live the gospel by playing. Their recreation was not their spiritual life, but their experiences were "spiritualized recreation."

1. *Church News*, June 26, 1971, 11; *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 27, 1971, B1.

2. "News of the Church," "Big Changes in MIA Programs," *New Era* (September 1971):44.

3. "Programs and Policies Newsletter," *Ensign* (September 1971):76.

4. L. Tom Perry, "He Has Given a Law for All Things," BYU Devotional, November 29, 1977, http://byubroading.org; Church News Staff, *Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1974), 169-174, 205.

5. YMMIA Athletic Committee Files, 1942-1971, Church History Library, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Hereinafter referred to as Church History Library.), used by permission.

6. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 600-01.

7. A survey of more than one hundred interviews showed that only ten talked about why they felt all-church tournaments were discontinued. In many cases, the question was not asked.

8. Dale Christensen Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Orem, Utah, 8, 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.).

9. Thomas Bagley Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 8-9.

10. *YMMIA Athletic Handbook, 1971-72* Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1971), 17. (Hereinafter referred to as *YMMIA Athletic Handbook* with the year.)

11. Ibid., 3.

12. *YMMIA Athletic Handbook, 1972-73*, 4. This statement was also in the 1969-70 and 1971-72 handbooks.

13. Allen Brown Oral History, interviewed by Ben Sandel, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 5.

14. Dale Robinson Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Alpine, Utah, 2.

15. Daniel Burbank Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, Taylorsville, Utah, 1-3.

16. Scott Beal Oral History, interviewed by Erin Hutchings, 2003, Lehi, Utah, 7.

17. Ron Record Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2004, Telephone Interview, 8-9.

18. Ibid.

19. Bruce Dickerson Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, Orem, Utah, 3.

20. Richard Ball Oral History, Interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, Salt Lake City, 3.

21. Ray Hale Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 8.

22. Kenneth Erickson Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 4.

23. Allen and Leonard, 600.

24. Owen Rich Personal History, copy of pages in possession of Jessie Embry.

25. Victor L. Brown, "The Aaronic Priesthood MIA," *Ensign* (July 1973), 80; Allen and Leonard, 600.

26. *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 27, 1971, B1.

27. "June Conference, 1975–The End of an Era," *New Era*(October 1975):16.

28. Allen and Leonard, 654.

29. "News of the Church," *Ensign* (September 1974):89-96.

30. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 262-263.

31. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 13, 209.

32. Ryan and Kacy Hastings, "Post All-Church Tournament Softball in Fresno," term paper in possession of Jessie Embry.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Hutchings Oral History, 21; Larry B. McGee Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, 9.

36. Mel Jones Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Mesa, Arizona, 3-4.

37. Greg Davis Oral History, interviewed by Gary Huntington, 2003, 2-3.

38. Kenneth Erickson Oral History, interviewed by Michael Cannon, 2003, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2.

39. "Church Consolidates Meeting Schedules," *Ensign* (March 1980):73-78.

40. N. Eldon Tanner, "First Presidency Message: A Practical Religion," *Tambuli* (August 1979):1.

41. Clifford J. Stratton, "Sports and the Gospel: A Purpose Higher than Victory," *Ensign* (February 1992):58.

42.Robert L. Backman, "Revitalzing Aaronic Priesthood Quorums," *Ensign* (November 1982).

43. Kathleen Ludbeck, "Activities That Change Lives," *Ensign* (August 1983):12.

44. Ibid.

45. Hutchings, 21.

46. Jones, 5.

47. Boyd Jarman Oral History, interviewed by Benjamin Sandel, 2003, 8.

48. Stratton, 58.

49. This information comes from my memory of the events and conversations with Shirley Olsen, A. LeGrand Richards, and Cindy Richards.

50. Liesl Christensen email, in Jessie Embry's possession.

51. Jake Davis email, in Jessie Embry's possession.

52. John Brumbaugh email, in Jessie Embry's possession.

53. Sara Manning email, in Jessie Embry's possession.

54. Cynthia Clark email; Andrew Clark; Steve Clark email; in Jessie Embry's possession.

55. http://ce.byu.edu/yp/efy-programs/efy/index.cfm; retrieved January 24, 2008.

56. "June Conference 1975–The End of a Era," *New Era* (October 1975):16.

57. Larene Porter Gaunt, "Celebrate!," *Ensign* (April 2005):43-44.

58. Church News Staff, *The Church in Action, 1971* (Salt Lake City: Church News, 1972), 15-16.

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60. "The Munich Area General Conference," *Ensign* (August 1973):40.

61. Jay Todd, "Konferns: A Report of the Scandinavian Area General Conference Held at Stockholm, Sweden," *Ensign* (October 1974):77.

62. Larry Hiller, "The South American Area General Conferences," *Ensign* (June 1975):71.

63. Vivian Paulsen, "'Catch a Happy Feeling'" *New Era (*November 1974):22.

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68. Ibid.

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71. Ibid., September 3, 2005, 8-9.

72. Ibid., July 23, 2005, 4, 7; August 13, 2005, 11.

73. Ibid., August 20, 2005, 10.

74. R. Christine Ollerton Oral History, interviewed by Lisa Christensen Gee, 2005, 6.

75. Bob Arnstrong, email, December 29, 2003.

76. Kathleen Carlile email, in Jessie Embry's possession.

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78. http://www.utahareasports.org, retrieved on December 7, 2007.

79. Ron Gerber Oral History, interviewed by Jenny Harris, 2003, 2.

80. Ibid., 15, 18.

81. Ibid., 1, 16.

82. See "Reverence in the Church: A New Long-Range Emphasis," *Ensign* (February 1977):11-13. This article was based on a reverence pamphlet that leaders sent throughout the Church and is similar to the ideas President Spencer W. Kimball suggested in a *Church News* article, September 18, 1976, 8-9, 15. One of the ways to promote reverence, according to the *Ensign* article, was to eliminate trophy cases which often held the all-church trophies.

83. Mauss.

84. O'Dea, 262-263.

85. Mauss, 26, 155-156, 198, 202, 207, 207, 212.

Glossary of Mormon Terms

Organizations

Congregations

Ward–A congregation with geographically defined boundaries. Wards usually have between 350-500 members.

Branch–A small congregation with fewer members.

Stake–An administrative organization that includes five or six wards.

Auxilaries–Church organizations created to help Church members.

Young Men and Young Women Mutual Improvement Association–Church organizations for teenagers ages 12 to 18. In 2006 the organizations are referred to as Young Men and Young Women. I abbreviate this organization as Mutual or YMMIA and YWMIA.

Relief Society–Church organization for women.

Primary–Church organization for children 3 to 11.

Sunday School–Until the 1980s Church organization for all members. Primary was a weekday activity. In 2006 Primary is held on Sunday and is the Sunday School program for children 3 to 11. Teenagers and adults attend Sunday School classes.

Priesthood Quorums–All worthy male members over the age of 12 have the priesthood and belong to quorums. Young men belong to the Aaronic Priesthood and are divided into deacons, teachers, and priests. The ages for these groups have changed over the years, but they are usually teenagers. Adult men belong to the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Leadership

Church President–The leader of the Mormon Church selected by God. In practice the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles becomes the president.

First Presidency–The church president and two men who assist him referred to as counselors.

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles–Twelve men who work as church leaders following the pattern of Jesus Christ's twelve disciples.

General Board–A group of men and/or women who direct the programs for each auxiliary on a general church level.

Bishop–The lay minister who presides over a congregation.

Stake President–The lay minister who presides over a stake.

High Council–A group of twelve men who make stake decisions and direct stake activities.

YMMIA and YWMIA stake boards–Groups of men and women who supervise activities for the organizations on the stake level.

Meetings

Sacrament meeting–the weekly worship service for all church members.

Sunday School–an instructional class on Sunday for all church members.

Mormon Terms

Angel Moroni–A Book of Mormon prophet who appeared to Joseph Smith. A statue of Moroni appears on many Mormon temples.

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