

The  
Victoria British Columbia Stake  
of

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



*Silver Anniversary*

A.D. 1975 - 2000

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to commemorate  
the twenty-fifth anniversary of its organization.

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### *Thank You!*

A hearty "thank you" to the members of the stake presidencies and presidencies of the stake auxiliary organizations that took the time and, in some cases, stretched their memories, to gather the information that makes this little publication possible. Once again the value of keeping a personal journal has been illustrated. Those who have kept a journal were able to put their contribution together with relative ease. Others struggled.

And thank you to the spouses of the branch, ward, and stake leaders, both male and female, who have given the support necessary for their husbands/wives to serve in bringing souls unto Christ in the twenty-five years this stake has been in existence. Without that support much less could have been done.

Although we pride ourselves on being a record keeping people, and although we keep some records very well, it is projects of this kind that show up our weaknesses. There are names that should be included in the lists of officers that appear here that do not appear simply because the editor has not been able to find anyone who can remember who they are. To these people I tender my sincere apologies. Your service is none-the-less valued.

Thank you one and all. Your cooperation is appreciated.

The editor.

**S**takes of Zion do not spontaneously generate. They grow out of the work of many people over long periods of time. And this is as true of the Victoria British Columbia Stake as of any other stake. The first members arrived in the area in 1875, the first missionaries in 1902, a Sunday school was organized in 1918, a branch of the church in 1942, and a mission district in 1959. However this story has been previously detailed<sup>1</sup>, so will not be further rehearsed here. This account will begin with the activities that took place on 09 February 1975, in the old Capitol Theater in Victoria, British Columbia.

### THE BIDDULPH YEARS, 1975-1984

**E**lder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, presided over the organization of this, the 679<sup>th</sup> stake of the Church. As he conducted the business of the conference he proposed the organization of the Victoria British Columbia Stake of Zion. The vote in favor was unanimous. It came as no surprise to those present when he proposed that Howard L. Biddulph be called as the first President of the new Stake. Robert J. McCue and Richard L. Krikava were sustained as counselors. Franklin H. Smith became the first Patriarch<sup>2</sup> of the new stake, and the High Council was composed of Roland O. Wood,

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<sup>1</sup>*Special District Conference, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Capitol Theatre, Victoria, B.C. February 9, 1975. See also, Robert J. McCue, "The Saints on Vancouver Island," The Ensign, April 1976, pp.45-50.*

<sup>2</sup>Patriarch Smith continues his valuable service. Except for 21 months that he and Sister Smith served as full-time missionaries in Britain, he has been the stake's only patriarch, and has given over 1300 patriarchal blessings. During his absence as a missionary Brother Garth Galbraith capably filled the office.

William F. Locker, Earl H. Smith, Gordon B. MacDonald, Barry E. Hall, Deloy S. Layton, Richard M. Perrett, Conrad D. Oviatt, William F. Metge, Leonard C. Pederson and Ross E. Butler. Donald R. Daugs was sustained as senior President of the Seventies Quorum with Owen Easthope and Layne Atwood as additional Presidents. Four of the Branches of the old District were reorganized as Wards: Colwood Ward, with Grant L. Fisher as the first bishop; Victoria First Ward, with Andrew S. Arnott as bishop; Victoria Second Ward, led by James H. Vance; and Nanaimo Ward, with Max E. Ockey presiding. The other units of the new Stake were the Countenay Branch (Brian Schow), Duncan Branch (Johann G. Duerichan), Port Alberni Branch (Larry T. Keene), Powell River Branch (Danny P. Inkster), and Sidney Branch (John M. Evans), for a total of four wards and five branches. The Sechelt and Pemberton portions of the Powell River Branch were at long last transferred to the Vancouver Stake. In 1976 the North Island Branch (Robert J. Smith), and Campbell River Branch (Jack Creaser), were added and the Qualicum Branch (Michael Murphy) in 1980 to bring the total to twelve units.

Elder Packer advised the Stake Presidency that they should get the rest of the stake accustomed to the idea that Victoria, even though it was at one end of the Island, was the Stake center, and that Stake meetings would be held in Victoria, and not in various other cities on the Island as had been the custom under the District administration. Even District conferences had been split into two sessions: one in Victoria and another in Nanaimo. The Stake Presidency would still have enough travelling to do with nine units to visit on a regular basis, expanding to twelve before they were released.

One of the challenging trips was to Port McNeil, where Robert J. Smith had taken a job as municipal clerk. He knew that there was one L.D.S. family there, and as he probed the population he found others who had been separated from the church for years. He got commitments from enough of them to make it worthwhile to rent space to hold meetings. He then petitioned the Stake Presidency to organize a branch. That meant that the group had to be visited and the possibilities assessed. Brother Smith advised that the visitors drive to Kelsey Bay and take the ferry to Beaver Cove where they would be picked up and driven to Port McNeil. For the next visit it was determined to take the overland route -- pavement to Gold River, and then a logging road for many miles, which ultimately connected with some of the finest highway on the Island. The life

expectancy of cars driven on that route was not normally very long, but the leaders of the North Island Branch nevertheless faithfully traveled to leadership meetings, even through winter snow. High Council visits were made by air. Deloy Layton and Ross Butler both had private pilot licenses and first Deloy and then Ross was assigned to fly in once a month to supervise Branch activities.

One consequence of holding all of the leadership meetings in Victoria was marathon leadership Saturdays once a month. Because of the long distances some of the local leaders had to travel it was deemed advisable to hold all of the necessary meetings on one day so that less travel would be involved. Saturday 8 March 1975 provides a good sample: twenty meetings, many of them overlapping, between 10 a.m. and 8:30 p.m., with temple recommend and other interviews from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.<sup>1</sup>

A significant change in Stake leadership took place on 4 June 1978. Richard Krikava, an employee of the Church Educational System, was transferred to Salem, Oregon. During his years in the Stake Presidency he had become well-known for his capacity to consume food and yet remain slim. On one memorable occasion when the Stake Presidency attended General Conference together, it was suggested that a snack would be in order before retiring for the night. All three ordered a milk shake. Richard, who was last to order continued "and with the milk shake I will have a hamburger and fries, etc. etc." Perhaps it was his jogging program, which included one run from Duncan over the Malahat to the Shell station on the Victoria side, that did the trick of keeping him slim, but in any case it was a source of wonder to those that associated with him.

The "Big Foot" games held annually on Tzouhalem Mountain in connection with the commemoration of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood were one of President Krikava's noteworthy contributions to the Stake. His dramatization of "the Iron Rod" and "The Armor of Righteousness" in Youth sessions of Stake Conference will also live long in the memories of those who witnessed them..

Richard was replaced by William F. Locker who took over the responsibilities for the Melchizedek Priesthood, and over the next six

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<sup>3</sup>See the appendix

years this loving, considerate and caring man was to exert an important influence among the saints. His wise counsel in financial and personal matters was always eagerly anticipated.

In May 1981 a Stake Priesthood Leadership meeting was held which proved to be one of the high points of President Biddulph's administration. Participants were invited to come fasting. President Biddulph gave the keynote address. The meeting was to address the three-fold mission of the Church: Perfect the Saints, Proclaim the Gospel, and Redeem the Dead. Early in his talk he quoted President Spencer W. Kimball to the effect that reluctance of the members of the church to reach out to others prevents the church from moving forward in major ways. This reluctance was linked to lack of faith, which is necessary to unlock the powers of Heaven. Six keys to increased faith were then enumerated and expounded upon: (1) Be personally righteous; exercise the faith to obey. (2) Develop righteous desires, goals with time limits. (3) Pray with real intent making commitments to the Lord. (4) Doubt not; but be believing. (5) Act promptly on resolves and inspiration before they fade away. (6) Expect to be tried and tested, but with faith call down the powers of Heaven to assist in overcoming these trials and tests and to bring to pass the saving of souls.

Elder Enzo Busche, as area administrator, gave the Stake leadership a challenge in 1983: increase the Melchizedek Priesthood numbers by 100 over the next year. The challenge was taken, and by March of 1984 the following results were obtained:

Prospective Elders reactivated and ordained:	36
Melchizedek priesthood reactivated	23
Converts ordained	11
Aaronic Priesthood advances	12
Increase of move-ins over move-outs	<u>29</u>
total	111

Another 25 men were ordained in March 1984.

This reactivation was coupled with a general increase in activity. Sacrament Meeting attendance in 1972-3 was 28%. When the Stake was organized (1975) it had reached 33%, and with the reorganization of the Stake Presidency in 1984 it had reached 45%. The population of the Stake and the number of units grew significantly during this time. In 1975 the new Stake had a population of 2,200 in four Wards and five Branches. At

the time of the reorganization of the Stake Presidency in 1984 it had 3,500 members in six Wards and Six Branches.

Besides the very real challenges of fostering spiritual growth among the Saints President Biddulph faced the formidable challenge of providing adequate meeting places for each Ward and Branch. When he became District President there were four church owned buildings on the Island: in Victoria at 2990 Quadra St., a building in Duncan recently purchased from the Catholic church, a very inadequate structure on Morpeth Ave. in Nanaimo, and a lovely first phase building in Port Alberni. By 1984 nine additional building projects had been undertaken: (1) the Stake center, (2) a new three phase building in Nanaimo, (3) a two phase structure in Sidney, (4) first phase in Qualicum, (5) a second phase in Port Alberni (which someone promptly tried to burn down), (6) first and second phases in Courtenay, (7) a first phase in Port McNeil, and (8, 9) buildings purchased from other denominations in Campbell River and Powell River. The total cost of these projects was approximately \$7 million, the Stake share about \$2.1 million. This does not take into account the amount that was raised for the construction of the Seattle Temple.

Raising the monthly payments for these buildings was a real challenge. A highlight of the fund raising campaign came early in January 1979 when the starting fund<sup>4</sup> for the Stake Center was being raised. On 13 January the Bishops and Branch Presidents were called to a special meeting and informed that because of various delays and increases in costs the starting fund was at least \$50,000 short. It was agreed that the money would be raised, but nothing much happened until the first Sunday in February when a message was read in all fast and testimony meetings in the Stake appealing for help. Over \$50,000 was raised in two Sundays. The North Island Branch raised over \$6,000, 150% of their 1979 assessment. The Victoria Third Ward contributed \$24,000, 91% of their year's assessment. One little boy gave the money he had saved for a bicycle. Another man of modest means gave \$3,000.

<sup>4</sup>This term will be unfamiliar to new and younger members of the Church. At this time in the history of the Church local units were required to raise locally 30 - 50% of the cost of the buildings, and a substantial portion of this amount had to be submitted to church headquarters before the project could begin.

It was one of the finest experiences the Stake had had to that point. As the people sacrificed to meet the crisis the spirit in the Stake measurably improved.

But the financial needs were not totally met with that one push. In 1980, for example, the building fund goal for the Stake was \$189,200, of which \$168,260 was raised, over \$14,000 every month. When the General Authorities changed the funding arrangements for building projects to the 96/4 ratio the Victoria B.C. Stake still owed the building committee of the Church about \$450,000. That debt was completely wiped out by the change in policy. As President Biddulph said at the dedication of the Stake Center:

More than one and one-half million was raised by the consecrated efforts of the saints in this small stake, in seven years. Then when the recession closed the forest industry and mills on our Island, putting many of our people out of work, in the hour of great need with \$450,000 still owed on these new buildings, the policy of the Church changed. Truly, although our faith was strong, we were 'saved by grace after all we could do.'

Because a monthly payment had been sent but did not reach Salt Lake City until after the announcement of the change in policy, the Stake actually ended up with a credit of \$13,000 in its building fund account.

One of the more intriguing stories of the Biddulph Years is directly related to the building program. Elder Packer's challenge to build a Stake Center was taken seriously, and almost immediately Ross Butler, a member of the High Council and a realtor, was assigned the task of finding a suitable site. Blocks of land in Gordon Head, Oak Bay and Colwood were looked at and rejected for various reasons. When he found a parcel of land on the corner of Wilkinson Road and Mann Avenue of suitable size and price, the Spirit indicated that it was an agreeable spot. However, it was in the Agricultural Land Reserve: the reason for the affordable price. So, an offer was made and accepted, subject to approval for a non-conforming use of ALR land. Saanich Council under Mayor Ed Lum agreed to support the application.

The builders of the subdivision just east of the Stake Center were also interested in this parcel of land, and with a non-conforming use approved they went to the owner and offered double the price for which

he had agreed to sell it. With time fast running out on the agreement for sale to the Church the vendor attempted to disappear to avoid consummating the deal. Ross Butler and Dennis McKay, a lawyer, were asked to somehow make sure that the necessary papers were signed. On Friday afternoon of the week-end that the agreement was to expire they parked their car in the driveway of a friend kitty-corner from the property. They had not been able to contact the vendor at his work but felt impressed that he would come to the house long enough to pick up some things before disappearing for the weekend. Their impressions were correct, and when the gentleman drove into his driveway they drove in right behind him, effectively blocking his exit. They rang the doorbell and informed him that they were there to consummate the deal, and implied that legal action could be taken if he declined to sign the necessary papers. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief when he signed.

Another formidable hurdle was the Capitol Region District Board which also had to approve non-conforming use of land in the ALR. The Chairman of that board, a gentleman from Saturna Island, was absolutely opposed to a church being built on the site. All Victoria members of the board were lobbied and there seemed to be sufficient support to get the proposal approved if the chairman did not succeed in otherwise persuading the meeting in which the application was to be considered. Those involved on the part of the Church were praying that he would change his mind. He apparently did not do so, but the Lord intervened. The chairman was traveling to Victoria for the meeting by float plane when a sudden gust of wind caught the plane and flipped it over on take off. No one was hurt, but the gentleman did not get to the meeting and the application was approved in his absence.

However, the struggle was not yet over. Saanich Council still had to approve a land-use agreement. This necessitated a public hearing. The rate payers association in the neighboring subdivision went on record as being opposed to the construction of a church on the site. That opposition was effectively neutralized when Blair Ripley, in whose driveway Ross and Dennis had waited for the owner of the property, rose and stated that he had lived across the street from a Mormon Stake Center in Lethbridge, Alberta, and that on the basis of that experience he was confident that all of the fears and objections that had been expressed in the meeting were groundless. He would welcome the Mormons as neighbors. Council

approved the application.

The house on the Stake Center site, as soon as it was vacated, was turned into a Stake office. The downstairs was rented to a pair of missionary Elders so there would be someone living in the structure, the master bedroom become the Stake President's office, another bedroom became the clerk's office, and the living room/dining room area became the high council room. Parking for High Council meetings was a problem, but that inconvenience was more than a fair trade for the partial alleviation of the crowding in the Quadra Street building. When the house was sold and moved from the property space was rented at 29 Cadillac Avenue. It was something less than ideal, but it served the purpose.

Because local building code regulations demanded that a washroom for the disabled be provided in the building the standard plan had to be modified. Space had to be found elsewhere for the electrical room so that the handicapped washroom could be accommodated. The contour of the land suggested that it go under the north-east wing of the building that would otherwise require extensive fill before the concrete pad could be laid. And since one room had to be placed below it seemed to make sense to leave a larger area unfilled and undeveloped. This room would ultimately become the well-used Family History Center.

Once the debt connected with the building program had been retired it was appropriate to dedicate the completed buildings. This task was delegated to the Stake President. The highlight of the dedications was that of the Stake Center, which took place on 10 October 1982, appropriately enough the day before Thanksgiving. In the talk given before the dedicatory prayer President Biddulph reflected the Thanksgiving theme:

As I contemplate the great spiritual blessings we received during those seven years [of fund raising] as well as the enjoyment we now have of ten chapels, including this wonderful stake facility, I am constrained to exclaim in the words of Moroni: 'God has not ceased to be a God of miracles. Behold, are not the things that God hath wrought marvelous in our eyes? Yea, and who can comprehend the marvelous works of God?' (Mormon 9:15-16).

Yet, as the Lord told Nephi: 'I am a God of miracles . . . and I work not among the children of men save it be according

to their faith' (2 Ne. 27:23). It is because of the wonderful outpouring of faith and sacrifice and consecration among the Latter-day Saints that the Lord was able to open His miracle and help us beyond our own meager means in unexpected and unforgettable ways throughout the whole seven years. . . . These beautiful buildings, all ten, . . . [have been built] primarily because the saints across Canada and the world have followed Malachi's injunction on tithes. Most of what we enjoy has come from outside us. Oh how grateful we should be for righteous saints across the world! Oh how grateful we should be to the Lord, our God, for His mercy and loving kindness.

Let us remember the true purposes for which the Lord's miracle was performed. He called us not to erect a monument to Him, a mausoleum, nor a commodious place to relax and vegetate. He wants this to be a Service Centre. In the Words of King Benjamin 'When ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God.'

At the time the Stake was organized it was expected that any self-respecting Stake would have a welfare project. Because the Saanich Peninsula was a prime agricultural area it was felt that it would be a logical place for such a project. While a search was being made for suitable land to purchase, Don Keith volunteered the use of some of the land he owned for a trial run. With Barry Hall, an experienced agriculturist, shaking his head in unbelief, a potato project was undertaken. The planting, hilling and weeding were faithfully done, but in spite of best efforts the potato field looked as much like a pasture as anything else. Nevertheless harvest time eventually came and the potatoes were dug. The result of the summer's labor was something less than gratifying. The potatoes were about the size of golf balls, an average of perhaps one to a hill, and with at least one couch grass root through each tuber. Needless to say, that was the end of the potato project on that land, and before something suitable came available for purchase in January 1977 the golden nematode infestation had been discovered and a ban placed on the transportation of agricultural products from the peninsula. It was a blessing that no land had been purchased as potatoes,

which would have been the primary crop grown on it, would have been next to worthless. The Courtenay Branch, however, successfully raised potatoes on the surplus land behind their chapel; and sold many of them to the Saints in Victoria.

It has been said that when one is called to a stewardship one should begin to prepare for a release, and this Howard Biddulph did. He knew that under normal circumstances he would have nine or ten years to accomplish what he needed to accomplish as Stake President. So it was no surprise when in January 1984 word came that the Stake Presidency would be released at the March conference. And so after 9 years of faithful service as stake president the Biddulph era ended, except that after a year as counselor to the full-time mission President Elder Biddulph returned as Regional Representative advisor to the new Stake Presidency for a period of another three years.

Of the many scriptures that were used in the President's talks and instructions to the saints in the Victoria District and Stake perhaps two stand out as the objectives of his administration:

For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments. (D&C 82:14)

But my disciples shall stand in Holy places, and shall not be moved. (D&C 45:32)

He made a lasting imprint on Vancouver Island and the name Howard L. Biddulph will be fondly remembered in this stake for many years to come<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>In 1992 three new missions in the former Soviet Union were created. President Biddulph realized his longtime dream of serving a mission among the Slavic peoples when he was called as the first president of the Ukraine Kiev Mission. He had previously been serving as president of the Austria Vienna East Mission. He currently serves as Associate of the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, and Director of the Ukraine Focus Program of Brigham Young University.

## THE CRAPO YEARS: 1984-93

At the March 18, 1984 Victoria Stake conference, under the direction of Elder Dean E. Larsen of the Seventy and Regional Representative Jack Smith, a new stake presidency was sustained. C. Ross Crapo was called as president. As counselors he chose James H. Vance and Frank D. Hutchinson, men he has described as "self-effacing, humble and full of integrity. Always working, and mostly behind the scenes, they both shunned the spotlight and took great enjoyment in lauding the efforts and contributions of others."

President Crapo recalls the following experience that occurred before his call came:

In January 1984, President Howard Biddulph had called a joint meeting of the high council and bishops of the stake. In that meeting he revealed that he and his counselors were to be released in the upcoming conference. Several weeks after the announcement I had an unusual experience. I went to work on a Monday in the early part of February. During the day I experienced something that felt like a heart attack. I felt tightness to my chest and pain and a tingling sensation running down my left arm. The pain was not exquisite but constant.

Accompanying this physical manifestation was a feeling of discouragement and a dark outlook in my daily activities. I was impressed that this was not a heart attack but was a manifestation of the power of the adversary. I was prompted by the Spirit to know that my thoughts were correct. Despite the new perspective the discomfort and cloud persisted the whole day and as I related my experience to Kathy that night I was fatigued and went to bed early. The next day the 'symptoms' were gone. After reflecting on the experience I felt that something significant was to transpire in my life.

Because I was serving as a bishop I realized that I would be interviewed and asked questions that would help acquaint the visiting general authority with the stake and with the leaders in the area. One day, as I was pondering the upcoming interview, in my mind came the question 'what do you think the people of this stake need?' Almost immediately the answer came.



*Leadership in individual spiritual self-reliance. The ability to rely on the Lord, go to the Lord and know the Lord will answer one's prayer and innermost desires. Also, living a life focussed on the words of the prophets, modern and ancient, and fully living according to their counsel.*

This experience became the foundation of our mandate for the next nine years. Our emphasis was placed on *Perfect the Saints*. Everything we did found its way back to helping the individual gain a stronger testimony and a firm gospel foundation. We felt that if we could help the individual, have him focus on family prayer, personal prayer, family home evening, scripture study, fasting, payment of tithes and offerings, a blessing on the food, keeping the Sabbath day holy and finally spending time together as a family that we would in a generation have a church filled with saints that would naturally attract the honest in heart and missionary work would flourish. We needed to put on the armour of the gospel to become a Zion people and in so doing the three-fold mission of the church would be accomplished.

The new presidency quickly learned what it was like to plan leadership meetings, hold priesthood interviews and visit the 8 wards and 3 branches on Vancouver Island, plus Powell River.

An immediate goal was to increase the number of active members and strengthen the up-island units so that the stake could be divided. This occurred at the stake conference in March 1986, presided over by Elder Robert Harbertson. The Courtenay District was formed, with Mel Snyder as district president. This left the stake with six wards and a membership of about 2200, with Nanaimo being furthest from the stake headquarters. The other six units, with a membership of 900, became branches in the Courtenay District. Again, President Crapo's memories of the details of that process are inspiring:

President Pulman [of the Canada Vancouver Mission] had a great deal of experience with district and stake formation. I, like the previous stake president, wanted the northern saints to govern themselves. I wanted them to make the leap [into stake hood] completely and quickly. As I discussed the situation with President Pulman and Elder Biddulph I became convinced that

if President Pulman would [take the northern units of the stake into the mission and] largely let the northern brethren take the responsibility of self-governance and make them essentially a "stake" even though they were a district, that individuals would more quickly be ready for the additional responsibilities and autonomy of stake hood.

When we split the district from the stake the responsibility fell to President Pulman to organize the district. In deference to our efforts he asked Elder Biddulph and me to interview the northern brethren, select a district president, and help them organize the Courtenay District. This was a wonderful experience as Elder Biddulph and I met with the bishops and branch presidents of the northern part of the stake. After a long process of interviewing we knelt in prayer. Elder Biddulph asked me to be voice. As I began to pray words were given me to say, words of summation and review of our interviews and the spirit we had felt with certain brethren. As the prayer concluded, and before we arose to our feet, Elder Biddulph said "It looks like we have our leader in Bishop Snyder." This was my feeling also. We invited him into the branch president's office in Courtenay, where the interviews had been conducted, and called him as president of the new district.

It was a choice experience to organize a district and the beginning of a dream to bless the lives of the great saints in the northern part of the Island.

As the years passed several questions repeatedly arose as the presidency counselled together: "Where is our strength, are we helping the individual, what will bless the family?" This was the foundation of the direction this stake presidency took. When recommendations came and weighed favorably in this light they were prayerfully considered. The temple proxy program, inherited from the previous administration, was strengthened because of its potential for strengthening individuals, families and ultimately the larger family (wards and stake). The young adult branch, expansion of the Family History Center, the enlargement of the Quadra Street building, the Christmas pageants – all came by way of the need to build individuals.

With the passing of President Spencer W. Kimball in 1985, Ezra Taft

Benson became president of the Church. The new hymn book was published in 1985, and in 1986 the church announced that stake seventies quorums were to be discontinued. A significant development was the provision of computers in chapels for financial and membership records and for family history research. In late 1989 the budget allowance program was announced, which eliminated member contributions to ward and stake budgets.<sup>6</sup> Henceforth the cost of church activities, and building construction and maintenance, were to be paid for from tithing funds. While this was a great blessing for the members, it was initially a challenge for the stake and the wards to operate within the allowance provided. Initially the new stake presidency had kept up the celebrations and big party occasions customary in the stake, but slowly over time, and even before the new budget allowance system came into effect they began to contain extravaganzas and the burden of planning and preparation that devolved upon some people, in favor of smaller ward and family focussed activities. This happened in athletics as well. Focus was placed on participation rather than competition.

There appeared to be a problem of missionaries returning home and not having significant responsibility to replace the weight they had carried in the mission field. Persistent urging by Richard McCue resulted in a singles young adult branch (dependent on the Victoria 1st Ward) being organized 28 April 1989, with Irvin Burbank as branch president. The vision of a formal institute building has not been realized. Nevertheless, 10 years ago the average attendance was 20 young adults. Today that has doubled. Leadership and teaching opportunities have been created. Eternal marriages have been contracted. A need was met.

As stake membership grew new units were organized. In addition to the young adult branch, in the early 90s the Nanaimo Ward was divided. Bishop Ken Smallwood was sustained as bishop of the new Mount Benson Ward and James Bowden was called to serve as bishop of the Nanaimo Ward.

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<sup>6</sup>Prior to this change stake assessed wards amounts of money for the stake budget fund, and the wards assessed individual members amounts to be donated to the ward budget fund. The cost of the activities each unit could enjoy were thus limited only by the amount that could be collected for "budget."

A highlight of the first quarter century of the stake's existence has been temple work. This was achieved in spite of the great inconvenience and expense involved. The leadership of Robert J. Smith, the high council advisor responsible for this work, was truly exemplary. From 1984 to 1986, 32 "special proxies" were called from the stake to spend one week each month at the Seattle Temple. There were also 19 ordinance workers from the stake during this time. In 1986 the stake average was 19.9 ordinances per recommend holder, second highest in the church. Bob recalls that he and his wife, Vera, did a total of 2500 endowment sessions from 1984 to 1988, but that the record was set by Bob and Katie Smythe in 1986 when they completed 586 endowments in that year. The attendance at the 1986 Stake Temple day was 312. Bob Smith served as a temple worker from 1983 to 1997, with only a nine month leave of absence following Vera's death.

To accommodate the need for a larger and more secure site, the Family History Centre was relocated to the basement under the east wing of the stake centre in 1990. Under the direction of Cliff Stutter and Sandra Gill, the library became well known and heavily used in the community. It is the busiest in the province, and one of the busiest in Canada. Family history libraries were later established in the Nanaimo and Duncan chapels. Church developed computer software - *Personal Ancestral File* and *FamilySearch* - aided members in their genealogical research.

In 1984, from August 15 to August 22, young men from the stake attended the LDS Northwest Encampment in Idaho. The three members of the stake presidency, bishops and Aaronic Priesthood leaders, and 80 scouts from the stake were among the 11,000 participants. The Sunday sacrament meeting was memorable. Victoria Stake young men took part in the blessing and passing of the sacrament, which took nearly an hour to complete. The whole week will live long in the memories of those who participated.

The following year the young women from the stake attended a conference in Ellensburg, Washington, under the leadership of the stake young women presidency, Lorraine McKay, Chris Hitchmough and Linda Payne. The highlight of this activity was the testimony meeting held late on the last evening. The week also saw a number of the sisters from the stake dress in period costume and represent prominent sisters from the early days of the church. After this first performance, Pauline Burbank, Vida Gronnestad, and Liz Clapp went on to be seen at many local events.

Also during this period Priest-Laurel conferences were established.

Under the leadership of a new young women president, Linda Payne, the stake initiated this activity which brought youth of the priest-laurel age group together for a weekend of testimony building. This activity currently (2000) involves five stakes, each of which hosts the event on a rotational basis. This period saw a tremendous growth among the youth of the church with many service projects in the community that ranged from collecting food for the Mustard Seed shelter to cleaning the down town area.

In 1986 the province of British Columbia was threatened with a new and insidious evil: destination gambling establishments. It was a very serious threat because the provincial government reportedly supported the plan. Elder Biddulph sounded the alarm and indicated that he was going to involve himself publicly to defeat the movement. He met with Murray Coell to ask advice on how best to attack the problem. A plan was formed. It consisted of a researched exposé of the influence of gambling which was sent to the 72 municipalities in the province. The stake, in the person of Teresa Watters, provided assistance in typing and photo-copying the brief. In addition the membership of the church was encouraged to write to their MLAs. In this stake Priesthood leaders took time for letter writing in priesthood meetings over several weeks. Each week these letters were gathered and released up and down the Island. The result of the campaign was that the MLAs decided the issue was too hot and politically unwise to support. The first attempt at destination gambling was defeated.

On 10 August 1986 the Mormon Tabernacle Choir visited Victoria in conjunction with its trip to perform at *Expo 86* in Vancouver. Our stake hosted 500 guests for lunch. Vida Gronnestad, Erica Koch and Henry Watters (with some helpers) performed a veritable miracle in serving a meal of barbecued salmon and salads in twenty minutes.

In the meeting held after the luncheon those present were treated to a short concert featuring numbers from small groups of Choir members. Near the end of the meeting Wendel Ashton, the president of the Choir, invited its members to stand wherever they were seated. He announced that they would sing *As I Survey the Wondering Cross*. President Crapo felt that this singing came in response to a feeling of the hospitality and spiritual desires of the Victoria saints. As the Choir sang it was as if the heavens opened, so beautiful and grand was the music and the spirit that accompanied it. Some remarked that it seemed to them that the angels of heaven joined their voices with the choir. The audience joined with the Choir in singing the opening

and closing hymns. Ken Nelson, in leading this congregational singing, came as close as he could to conducting a performance of the Tabernacle Choir. It was a powerful and moving experience, not only for Brother Nelson, but for all who were present.

In February 1987 President Benson gave his famous address concerning mothers staying in the home. It inspired many sisters contemplating work outside the home to abandon the idea, and others, who had been so working, to leave the workplace. This reinforced the stake presidency's goal of strengthening the family.

The presidency rejoiced in the personal successes of stake members: personal growth, family growth and successes were treasured and gave encouragement to try not to fill the time of members in activities that took mom or dad away from the family. It was believed that though the voids would be painful at first, individuals would find the best way to care for their time and that they would take the counsel of the brethren to heart and strengthen their families.

In September 1992 a three day Stake Scout leadership program was held at Camp Bernard. Invited speakers included two members of the General Church Young Mens board plus President Heber and Sister Ardeth Kapp, who had recently arrived to preside over the Canada Vancouver Mission.

The stake participated in two regional conferences. In 1987 the conference was held in BC Place in Vancouver, with President Thomas Monson in attendance. In 1992 the leadership meeting, presided over by Elder Howard W. Hunter, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was held in Vancouver, but a Sunday session under the direction of Elder Haight was held in Victoria for Island members.

Duncan's new second phase chapel on Tzouhalem Road was completed in 1985 and dedicated on 14 April 1991.

The Quadra chapel received an addition and extensive renovations in 1992. This project posed some interesting challenges. Initial requests to expand the building met with a willingness only to "spruce it up." But after an appeal was made directly to the area office in Boise, Idaho, approval was given to start architectural drawings for a genuine renovation. When the drawings were completed Peter Gill and Henry Watters looked them over, invited President Crapo to accompany them on a walk through the building and assess the practicality of the new plan. It soon became evident that the

plans were not practical. Seeing the president's puzzlement over how architectural plans could be unworkable, Brother Watters, ever resourceful, pulled out another set of plans that he, Brother Gill and Diane Gavilan had drawn up. These made ample provision for classrooms in the quad area, another bishop's office and a more adequate library. President Crapo was impressed. He took the plans with him to Boise where he attended a stake presidents leadership meeting about two weeks later. The director of operations in the Boise office was sufficiently impressed with the plans that he volunteered to go over them with President Hugh Pinnock personally. The director later quoted President Pinnock as saying "These Victoria saints are good people. They deserve our best efforts and support. Give President Crapo whatever is needed." In the words of President Crapo:

This was a far cry from the new hardware and aluminum framed front and back doors and a paint job that was first suggested. The final result was a beautiful expansion. A building that had required the saints' best efforts in raising money to build had received an addition worthy of the spirit of sacrifice that had built it in the first place.

What would become a very significant tradition in the stake was started when Sister Connie Hudson suggested staging a Christmas pageant for the benefit of the community. It met the criteria of potentially strengthening individuals and families so was approved. Today it is better than ever, drawing many of the children, youth and adults of all ages to participate to bring good will and recognition to the church here on the Island. Similar pageants have been established as yearly community service events in Nanaimo and Duncan.

As our presidency's term was drawing to an end I [President Crapo] contemplated the extension of our nine year theme. I saw a new generation standing on the shoulders of its parents, having a tradition of strengthening family first, and living by the Lord's direction to them. I saw the beginning of increased faithfulness and righteousness, and as I look around seven years after my release that vision is being fulfilled.

Elder Merlin R. Lybbert of the Second Quorum of The Seventy presided over the 20-21 March 1993 stake conference in which a new stake presidency was sustained, consisting of Jackson E. Ellis, as President, and Grant R. Gainor and Robert B. Morales as counselors.

President Ellis was assigned by Area Presidency to be Chairman of Public Affairs in the B.C. Region. Subsequently a call was extended to Brother Cy Porter from Qualicum Branch to serve as Regional Director of Public Affairs. Through the efforts of Brother Cy and Sister Pat Porter and the effective public affairs network established in supportive coastal and hinterland stakes and districts of the province, the profile of the Church was raised to a higher level. Highlights of this ongoing process were reported in the "Pathfinder," a quarterly publication circulated by the Porters, that featured the best of the P.A. efforts throughout the province.

Several other projects were put into motion in 1993. Emphasis was given throughout the stake re: the need to organize quorums into threefold committees<sup>7</sup> to more effectively do the work of the kingdom.

It was felt that the stake center should have the lovely works of art prepared by the Church for meetinghouse display. These were subsequently purchased and installed. (Renovations performed later in the other chapels of the stake also benefited by the inclusion of these themed paintings.) The Stake High Council was organized into Aaronic and Melchizedek committees to enable a more concise focus by council members on their specific assignments. A special temple day was held for members of the stake presidency and high council to train as veil workers. A special temple fireside was held featuring Pres. & Sister Nash of the Seattle Temple Presidency in an effort to enlist the support of the membership to continue the long established tradition of the Island saints in the work of the temple.

1994 was proclaimed United Nations "Year of the Family." This coincided well with the stake presidency's strong emphasis on organizing ourselves to strengthen our families. The theme of the March conference was "The Latter-day Saint Family Traditions." Subsequent activities provided through the year were designed to assist in building strong family

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<sup>7</sup>Perfect the Saints, Proclaim the Gospel, Redeem the Dead.

traditions. Efforts were initiated to follow the "reduce and simplify council" issued repeatedly by the Brethren. Stake activity calendars were screened and trimmed, in order to more fully enable families to have space and time to follow the counsel.

Our stake enjoyed the frequent utilization of the generous training talents of President Heber and Sister Ardeth Kapp from the Canada / Vancouver Mission.

The stake presidency implemented what has become a tradition: a quarterly "Temple Bus" to assist members with transportation needs.

A dry pack canner was purchased for personal preparedness use. This canner has since proven to be a well-used item throughout the stake.

Ward conferences included combined quorum/relief society meetings wherein the stake presidency conducted open discussions on the need to follow the counsel of the Brethren with regards to inviting the input of our sisters in the counsels of the church. These discussions provided valuable insight on this need.

A Lamanite Family History Committee was organized under the direction of President Robert Morales, to respond to the needs of our Lamanite brothers and sisters in the stake. Impressions received by the stake presidency revealed the pressing need for temple work to be performed for the ancestors of our coastal tribes. A Lamanite Family Conference was hosted by the Victoria Stake Lamanite committee on the Canada Day weekend.

Construction and renovation on the Duncan building added a formal fixed-seating chapel, a family history center, additional classrooms and a two Bishopric suites.

A notable occurrence in the stake during 1995 was the quiet beginning of a very major B.C. Archive microfilming project undertaken by the Church through the capable hands of brother Chris Massey. This project, which initially began with a two year completion window, subsequently grew to taking approximately six years to complete.

A very successful, well attended "Family Relationships" seminar was conducted in June. Guest presenters included: Jackson and Jill Ellis, Randy Keyes, Julie McLelland, Ron Mitchell, Mike Todd and Dennis Wright. All topics centered on ways and means of strengthening marriage and family relationships.

At the Stake Conference in October 1995 the stake presidency announced an additional incentive to enable families to follow the counsel of the Brethren to focus more fully on family responsibility: the reduction of programmed youth activity nights, with the intention of inviting fathers and mothers to assume a roll in the achievement efforts of their sons and daughters. The intent is to reduce the level of competing week-night activities with time together as families. It was also felt that youth leaders were inadvertently assuming stewardship that fell in the domain of parents.

Successful Christmas pageants were conducted in Victoria, Duncan and Nanaimo, attended by many hundreds of community members. Although they have required substantial effort, these pageants have continued to be a means of raising the profile of the Church in the south island communities.

One of the highlights of 1996 was a Stake "Parenting Seminar" conducted in May, with guest presenter James J. Jones. This was well attended and provided solid working principles for strengthening the family and raising children.

Two building dedications took place during the year. In May Elder Spencer Condie dedicated the Duncan meeting house. He also made a special presentation of a reproduction of a painting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of the Savior, to the local Saint Edward's Parish, in whose building the Duncan Ward met during the eight month project. It now occupies a prominent place on the wall of the parish lobby. Inscribed on the brass plaque are the words "When ye are in the service of fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God."

The Sidney chapel renovation and addition, which added a new relief society room, serving area, additional classrooms and a new hardwood gym floor, was dedicated by President Ellis 14 July 1996.

Concern over the government proposal to expand gambling in the province, resulted in an open letter being sent by President Ellis (as chairman of public affairs) to Premier Glen Clark and other politicians citing the Church's official position and concerns over the negative impact of gambling.

A regional priesthood training and conference was conducted in Vancouver in October. Elder James E. Faust of the Quorum of the Twelve and Elder Rolfe E. Kerr, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quorum of Seventy, traveled to Victoria to conduct a session of conference for island members.

1997 marked the sesquicentennial of the entry of the Saints into the Salt Lake Valley. Ward conferences were conducted around the theme, "The Law of Sacrifice" as demonstrated in our pioneer heritage. Stake conference, presided over by Elder C. Scott Grow in March, featured the theme "Faith in Every Footstep." Community service projects were conducted throughout the stake in keeping with a request from the First Presidency, in the spirit of sesquicentennial service. These featured cleanup work parties in Victoria and Nanaimo as well as a donation of quilts and foodstuffs and a cleanup and paint project at the Providence Farm in Duncan.

After rejection of an earlier request, further investigation into policies surrounding the criteria for new stake formation resulted in another request for the organization of a Nanaimo Stake. This time the request was considered under the "international" area requirements. A special effort was also made to enlist the support and endorsement of mission President Sterling Colten, who at the time was happy to see the additional ecclesiastical responsibilities of the district shifted to a stake presidency. Approval was received, and during the stake conference weekend of 25-26 October 1997 visiting general authority D. Todd Christofferson, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, presided over the formation of the new Nanaimo B.C. Stake. Elder Christofferson was accompanied by Elder Stephen H. Pond, of the recently sustained Area Authority. Bishop William Nilssen of the Nanaimo Ward was sustained and set apart as stake president, with Colin Van Horne and Hal Salway as his counsellors.

A new unit of the Church was organized on Salt Spring Island on 01 June, with Ted E. Baker as branch president and Per Svendsen as councilor and Melchizedek priesthood leader. The meeting place selected was the new "Lion's Hall" located in Ganges.

A Sesquicentennial stake camp was held at Providence farm in the Cowichan valley, 11-13 July 1997. This was a well attended event under the direction of Brother Al Turcotte, of the high council. It featured pioneer dress, games, evening entertainment, and an old time square dance. A special sacrament service was held on Sunday morning before the camp ended. For all who participated, this was a wonderful, memorable event. Reporters from various island newspapers interviewed leaders and members and some good press came out of the activity as well.

At the autumn Victoria Stake conference President Robert B. Morales was released as second councilor in the stake presidency and J. Brent Herrington was sustained in that position. President Morales made a substantial contribution in this calling in the four years he served. President Herrington was well qualified through experience and commitment to assume the stewardship.

1998 ward conferences centered around the theme "Will You Accept the Invitation To Come Unto Christ." In March, Elder Glenn L. Pace of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Area President, presided over stake conference. The theme of the Sunday session was "Coming Unto Christ, A Daily Walk."

Youth conference this year saw more than 250 youth participating in a downtown Victoria cleanup campaign, which included picking up trash and scrubbing graffiti off walls.

A formal request for a temple was submitted by all stake presidents in the province. This included a somewhat lengthy portrayal of the circumstances and challenges facing the saints from the island and elsewhere in meeting the needs of temple participation from our area. The request was acknowledged by the office of the First Presidency, and when the prophet visited Victoria he acknowledged the sacrifices being made and thanked the Saints for continuing to make them.

The month of July witnessed the beginning of the historic Canada-wide tour of President and Sister Hinckley and company. The "company" travelling with the Hinckleys included, Elder and Sister Packer, and Elder and Sister Pace. Victoria was their first stop. The special event on 31 July for Church members on the island was held at a local Victoria arena. The evening had a powerful influence on the many who came together at this special fireside with our beloved Prophet. Fast and testimony meeting the following morning witnessed many members bearing witness of "the witness" they had been endowed with the day before.

The fall of 1998 also saw the introduction of a several new Church handbooks of instruction. The conference theme for the Autumn stake conference was "Building Faith and Testimony" and this introduced a two year renewed emphasis on the need to improve the overall quality of teaching performed throughout the stake. Also introduced in this conference was the concept of "Family Week," the first week of each month, to enable families to be together, without feeling the need to be

drawn away by the demands of Church sponsored activities. The normally scheduled ward night, was encouraged to be used as a family achievement experience. The stake presidency feel strongly that in order to realistically follow the counsel of the Brethren regarding solid family experience, it is necessary to create space on the calendar to do so. Hence, beginning 1999, the first week was designated as such on the stake calendar.

Early in 1999 plans for the refurbishing and enlargement of the stake family history center were submitted for approval. Although the process of bringing this project into actuality had its share of roadblocks and false starts, due to the ever changing policies and procedures, the refurbishing and enlargement was completed and dedicated before the end of the year. President Gainor offered the dedicatory prayer. Amazing strides have been taken by the Church in the family history field. 1999 saw the announcement and introduction of a world wide Internet site, accessible to all with an interest in using the Church's resources in tracing their roots.

The new "member involvement in Church facility maintenance" was introduced in the stake this year, requiring the general membership to begin to take an increasingly active roll in building upkeep. This will take some good organization and getting used to, but it is our commitment to keep our facilities up to the excellent level to which they have been kept by our exceptional custodial staff over the years. Brothers Henry Watters, Jim Arnott, Alan Plumbly, and Sisters Dianne Gavilan, and Joan Thompson, along with others over the years past, have consistently gone far beyond the call of duty in facility maintenance.

The ward conference theme for 1999 was centered around the general theme of "Strengthening Our Latter-day Saint Community." Stake Conference, March 20-21, and was presided over by Elder Michael T. Robinson, Area Authority Seventy, and emphasized the importance of self reliance, as well as "Consecration, A Law That Blesses Spiritually and Temporally." Conference visitors also included President and Sister Robert P. Haight, who replaced the Knights, due to President Knight's sudden release because of cancer.

The annual stake Temple Day in May had a good representation of stake members in attendance. Later in the month, a special wood badge training weekend was squeezed into a Friday evening and Saturday experience. This was well attended. The annual seminary scripture bowl

and combined seminary/institute graduation included students and teachers from the whole island.

October saw a joint stake "Know Your Religion" lecture conducted in Nanaimo, with guest speaker brother Jack Marshall. Those who took the time to travel up to this Thursday evening activity reported it well worth the effort.

A delightful surprise came to all members with missionary callings during the latter part of November, when Elder and Sister David B. Haight met with the above for a little over an hour of informal testimony and training from Elder Haight. He recalled his visit during the regional conference in 1992. It was wonderful to feel and be blessed by the spirit and Apostolic mantle of this wonderful man.

December saw the small beginnings of what could potentially be a substantial blessing to the missionary efforts in the stake, in the calling of Cliff and Dot Stutter as Family History research stake missionaries. They will work in concert with the full time missionaries who will, in tracting and other contacts, make available to contacted individuals a tracing of their family name through the services of the Family History Center. With a two week turn around, the Stutters will do the research and the missionaries will present the results to the individuals. It is felt that this community service will be a potential blessing by introducing people to the concept of family research and also some of the doctrines of the Church.

As the calendar turns to a new century and a new millennium the stake is undertaking to establish a Church employment center in Victoria. This center will be officed at the Victoria stake center and will have regular office hours and a small staff to tend to the ongoing need for employment and skill upgrade direction. It is our goal to have this in place by the end of 2000.

Ward conferences in this first year of a new millennium focussed on the theme, "Spiritual Self Reliance." Participating speakers addressed the various aspects of the need to live lives in harmony with the Spirit, and reiterated the strength and sense of purpose and motivation which results in lives centered in Christ.

March stake conference was presided over by Elder Stephen H. Pond. It commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization of the Victoria, B.C. stake of Zion.

## FROM THE STAKE RELIEF SOCIETY PRESIDENTS

**Mona Smith**

**1975-1978**

I was called to be District Relief Society President in 1974 by President Howard L. Biddulph when Sister Win Wood was released. On 9 February 1975 I became the first Stake Relief Society President of the Victoria Stake with Coleen Biddulph as my counselor. In May Myrtle Smith as counselor and Doreen Lyle as Secretary were sustained. Coleen was released in August to become ward Primary president and Ruby Herrington was called to replace her as my counselor. In this same month associate Relief Society board members became full board members.

Probably our biggest challenge was the geographical size of the stake which encompassed all of the Island plus Powell River. There were 10 units. The presidency and board members travelled to the units often. In 1977 there were 24 visits recorded.

Ward Relief Society meetings were held during the week in the daytime so we spent a lot of weekdays travelling. I flew to Port McNeil to attend the Relief Society meeting there. Earl was always willing to help. Once he drove us to Comox for an evening Relief Society meeting, returning home about 2:30 a.m. and he was up teaching early morning seminary a few hours later.

We held quarterly leadership meetings and the sisters were so good to attend from their distant wards and branches. Our records show attendance of between 75 and 85 sisters.

We were privileged to put on the five hour Relief society segment of the regional meeting in Mt. Vernon, WA, and Vancouver, BC, in 1975 and 1977. After each year's regional meeting we came home and put on the post-regional meeting for the Relief society leaders in our Stake.

During this time we raised and sent money to Church headquarters to help finance the women's monuments that were subsequently erected in Nauvoo, IL.

Probably the highlight of our tenure was in September, 1975, when our presidency and board travelled to Salt Lake in our little red camper, again with Earl as our chauffeur, and little Randy as our mascot. This was a memorable trip to attend the last Annual General Relief Society Conference. There were delightful displays and workshops, and we

attended a reception to meet Relief Society General Board members and some of the General Authorities. We were all excited, but none as excited as Sister Myrtle Smith. She introduced herself to Elder S. Dilworth Young. "Elder Smith, I am Sister Young".

I always appreciated that when going to Salt Lake City, as we often did to visit relatives, the General Relief Society Presidency invariably welcomed me when I stopped to talk with them and gave me answers and ideas.

I have always found much joy in serving our Heavenly Father and am grateful for the opportunities I have had to serve.

**Ruby A. Herrington**

**1978 - 1981**

As a presidency, and often accompanied by board members, we visited each Relief Society in the Stake at least once a year. Leadership meetings were held quarterly. Although many had to travel long distances, the sisters were faithful in attending these leadership meetings. At first, the General Board of the Relief Society supplied themes and programs to be presented. As the membership grew worldwide it was felt that the sisters in the Stakes were capable of planning their own leadership agendas according to their own special needs.

Visiting teaching conferences were held annually.

One memorable conference was held in May 1979. In January a call went out of the women of the stake to submit original poetry, prose or music by the end of March. The quantity and high quality of material was overwhelming. A beautiful program was prepared and presented. Many tears were shed as we shared a Tribute to Women in Poetry, Prose and Song.

In 1980 the Stake Center was under construction, with completion scheduled for May. The presidencies of the Primary, Young Women and Relief Society planned a Women's Conference to be held in the new building. Unfortunately, the new building was not completed on time, so S.J Willis school was rented, and the *Daughters of Zion Conference* took place on 31 May 1980 in the Quadra Street meetinghouse with workshops in the school.

Sister Daryl Hoole, from Provo, Utah, was the guest of honor and keynote speaker. Over three hundred sisters, twelve years of age and older, attended from all parts of the Island and the Lower Mainland. All enjoyed



the inspirational presentations by Sister Houle, as well as a fashion show and the workshops. A late afternoon testimony meeting was most enjoyable.

At 6 p.m. the conference moved to the meetinghouse cultural hall. What a sight greeted our eyes! The room had been transformed into a tropical paradise with a fountain, masses of roses, plants and trellises with more greenery and colorful parasols. Under the direction of Brother Erwin Radeck some of the brethren had prepared a delicious buffet dinner. At the conclusion of the meal Brother Radeck received a standing ovation

Another highlight of 1980 was the visit of Sister Elaine Jack, of the General Board, in mid-June. She briefly explained the new program, assured us that more information would be forthcoming, and shared experiences she had enjoyed as she met with sisters around the world. We learned a great deal from this very generous lady.

She stayed over the weekend and accompanied the Herringtons to Campbell River on Sunday, where she acted as John's High Council speaking companion. The Relief Society in Campbell River was small, but Sister Jack gave much encouragement as she compared the many problems the sisters there faced with those experienced by sisters around the world.

#### **Norma Fletcher**

**1981 - 1983**

We had a full 12 member board, which was later reduced to just four. We had 12 units in the stake and each board member had the responsibility of keeping in touch with her unit. One of our social events dealt with family preparedness. Evelyn Layton prepared a very comprehensive booklet titled *How to Survive in the 80s*. Phyllis Locker and Sheryl Vance were wonderful counselors and both later became presidents of the Stake Relief Society.

#### **Phyllis Locker**

**1983 - 1988**

When I was stake Relief Society president I had Sheryl Vance and Edna Hammett as counselors, Doreen Lyle as secretary, and eight other sisters which made up a complete board at that time. Shortly after I was called we received notice from Salt Lake that the board was to be reduced to just the presidency and a secretary. We had been able to contact all 12 units and keep in touch quite easily at first but things changed drastically when we were reduced to just the four of us. I think that was the biggest happening

in our organization during that time. When Sheryl Vance was called to be 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Relief Society president we waited until Win Wood returned from her mission to have her replace Sheryl.

While I was president our annual conferences alternated between spiritual talks and workshops and "back to basics" presentations.

*Beneficial Life* had one of their conferences in Victoria and Eileen Bevan put on a production to entertain them. I, along with Bill, had the opportunity to have dinner with them one night and be seated beside Barbara B. Smith, General President of the Relief Society. She gave me some advice about Relief Society and shared some personal stories. We also heard from President and Sister Ezra Taft Benson the next morning when they gave very interesting talks.

#### **Sheryl Vance**

**1988 - 1994**

It was a great pleasure and a growing spiritual experience for me to serve as Stake Relief Society president. I enjoyed working with my presidency. We loved serving the sisters of this stake. We visited seven wards and one single adult branch, at least twice annually, bringing encouragement, instruction, and orientation to new presidencies. In June 1992, the Nanaimo Ward was split and the New Mount Benson Ward was formed. This brought the number of units in the stake to eight.

We were involved in four leadership meetings a year which included an Auxiliary Training Meeting. We gave the sisters encouragement and training in their individual Relief Societies and tried to help them move forward in their spiritual growth by holding Stake Women's Conferences nearly every year.

The 10 June 1989 Women's Conference featured sister Barbara W. Winder, General Relief Society president. Her husband accompanied her and they both spoke at the conference and at a Sunday evening fireside to which the men were invited. The theme of the conference was "Because She Is My Sister." Nearly 400 sisters were in attendance.

In 1990 a Women's Friendship Fireside was held instead of a conference.

The 04 May 1991 Women's Conference featured Shirley Burnham of the Vernon Stake. The theme: "Times of Transition." Once again the Courtenay District joined in this spiritual feast, the Port McNeil contingent

having driven for 6 hours to attend.

1992 was the Relief Society's sesquicentennial year. On 23 May we celebrated with a conference. We were blessed by being able to once again have a Relief Society general president as our guest: Sister Elaine Jack. She was accompanied by Sister Mercedes Harding of the Relief Society General Board. A special leadership training meeting for all the Relief Society presidents and all the bishops and priesthood leaders of the Stake and District was held before the conference. The theme of the conference was "Strengthening Sisterhood Through Service." A roast beef dinner was prepared and served by priesthood members of the stake. The talks and workshops were wonderful and uplifted the spirits of the almost 400 sisters who spent eight hours that day in attendance. They did not wish to go home afterwards and lined up to shake hands and talk with Sister Jack and Sister Harding.

In this sesquicentennial year the ward Relief Societies each had a birthday celebration and they put on a presentation of "A Society of Sisters" featuring Relief Society history and life stories of local sisters. These histories were then sent to Salt Lake City for archival purposes.

All ward Relief Societies participated in various service projects in the community for the sesquicentennial year. There were many heart-warming reports from sisters who took part.

17 April 1993 saw another Women's Conference with Sister May Kocherhans, a full-time missionary, serving with her husband in Nanaimo, as guest speaker. "A Celebration of Hope" was the theme of the conference. A variety of workshops and a luncheon rounded out this event.

The 1994 conference was in the planning stages when a change in leadership took place. The new presidency carried on with the plans.

The goals of this presidency centered on the mission of the Relief Society:

- Build a personal testimony
- Bless the individual woman
- Develop and exercise charity
- Enjoy a unified sisterhood.

We encouraged the sisters to get involved in the Relief Society and make a commitment: INVOLVEMENT + COMMITMENT = SISTERHOOD!

## Katie McCue

1994 - 1998

Our presidency carried on the goals of Relief Society that have been set out for us. This effort consisted of working to help the sisters to "Come Unto Christ." This was accomplished by such means as the lessons, the homemaking meetings, and the conferences.

We enjoyed getting acquainted with the sisters in the various wards of our stake. They were very creative in the ways they addressed the specific concerns of their units and were all dedicated to serving the Lord and helping the sisters of their ward grow in their testimonies of the gospel. We attended many special events: - visiting teaching workshops, anniversary socials, and 1997 Sesquicentennial events, marking 150 years since the Saints entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

Emergency preparedness was emphasized during our years of service. We encouraged each family in our stake to be prepared with at least a year's supply of essentials and a plan to rotate the food to prevent waste so that there was always a year's supply ahead.

Each year we planned a Women's Conference for our stake sisters. These conferences were the highlight of the year. In September 1994 the theme was "Where Much Is Given". This conference focussed on the Savior and how we can be blessed by following His example in our everyday lives.

In 1995 we worked with the priesthood in planning a conference for the brothers and sisters on building relationships. James Jones was our guest specialist at this event. His expertise on "Parenting" was much appreciated and there were groups formed in some of the wards to continue learning the skills he had taught. Most units have a set of his tapes to help families with parenting problems.

Our Women's Conference in 1995 was in September. The theme was "Peace and How It Comes From Our Savior." We had seven sisters share experiences from their lives showing how they were blessed with peace as they sought the Savior. Following our conference, we participated in the General Women's Conference via satellite. It was at this conference that President Hinckley presented the "Proclamation To The World." on the family.

The September 1996 Women's Conference was a great experience as we enjoyed the spirit of Jaroldeen Edwards, our special guest. She exemplified JOY and taught us how to get the most joy possible out of each

day, even the difficult ones. She was joined by her husband, Weston, at a fireside for all adults the next evening. They spoke about marriage relationships. It was a great fireside.

In May 1997 "Faith In Every Footstep" was the theme. Sidney Ward presented a playlet written by Kathy Kickbush called "Together in Faith" and the Nanaimo Wards performed the song "Faith in Every Footstep." The rest of the day was spent in workshops on spiritual, physical, financial, and family preparedness.

The last Stake Women's Conference organized by this presidency was held in May 1998. It was highlighted by the attendance of Sister Colleen Bernhart. She had overcome addictive behavior by using the *Book of Mormon* and has written a manual to help others who are having difficulties in life. She gave very inspirational and informative help to the sisters. She also spoke at a fireside for the youth and again on Sunday to the adults of the Stake. There have been Heart to Heart groups formed in some of the wards to carry on studying her ways to cope with life's problems.

As a presidency we felt it a privilege to serve the Lord in this capacity. We are grateful for the opportunity we had to serve the sisters of the Victoria B.C. Stake and we appreciate the support and help that we received from the sisters, our Priesthood leaders, and our spouses.

#### Janet McCullough

1998 - 2000+

As a presidency our goals are: (1) to help each sister in gospel knowledge, (2) invite all to come to Christ and be perfected, (3) have faith in God, (4) engage in compassionate service, (5) strengthen families, and (6) sustain priesthood leadership.

A major effort has been made to make the *Heart t' Heart* program available in each unit in the stake to provide help to people with addictive ways.

As part of our involvement in the community we have two sisters attending the monthly meetings of the Victoria Council of Women. In addition Janet McCullough and Vivian Robinson, with their husbands, have attended Emergency Social Services meetings.

In October 1999 we received from the General Relief Society, and distributed, the Relief Society declaration which sets forth in detail our belief concerning our divine origin and our joy in being daughters of God.

## APPENDIX

### MONTHLY LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

(A sample from the BIDDULPH ERA)

March 8, 1975 - 2990 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC.

10:00-11:00 a.m. - Stake Presidency Meeting - Stake Presidency Rm.

11:00-12:00 noon - Stake AARONIC PRIESTHOOD & YOUNG  
WOMEN Committee Meeting - Stake Presidency Rm.

(concurrently) - Stake MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD - M.I.A.  
Committee Meeting - Room #4

12:00-1:00 p.m. - LUNCH HOUR (....for some....)

(concurrently) - Personal P'hood Interviews (Stake Presidency with  
Powell River officers)

12:15-12:45 p.m. - BUILDING FUND Comm - Room #4

1:00-2:20 p.m. - Stake P E C Meeting - Rel. Soc. Rm.

2:20-3:00 p.m. - WELFARE SERVICES Committee  
- Rel. Soc. Rm.

2:00-3:00 p.m. - Stake MP-MIA SPECIAL INTEREST COUNCIL  
- Room #4

(concurrently) - Stake MP-MIA YOUNG ADULTS COUNCIL  
- Room #2

3:00-4:00 p.m. - Stake Correlation Council - Rel. Soc. Rm.

(Concurrently) - TEACHER DEVELOPMENT & INSERVICE  
Meeting - Room #3

4:00-5:30 p.m. - Training Seminar for MEETINGHOUSE  
LIBRARIANS - Room #1

(Concurrently) - BISHOPRICS & BRANCH PRESIDENCIES  
- Rel. Soc. Rm.

4:30-5:30 p.m. - Stake SEVENTIES QUORUM COUNCIL  
- Rooms #6-7

5:30-6:30 p.m. - Dinner Hour (....for some....)