

THOMAS STEPHEN JOHNSON - FIRST BISHOP of the Castle Dale Second Ward was born June 5, 1937, in Consumers, Utah. He was baptized August 26, 1945. He states, " The day that I was baptized was the first day that I ever remember going to Church. I was never really active until I took LDS Seminary in the tenth grade. The Seminary teacher, Rex L. Christensen, did more toward changing the lives of my friends and me than any other person could have done."

Bishop Johnson graduated from BYU, served a mission in Denmark, has been a Sunday School teacher in Provo, Secretary to Quorum of Seventy in Salt Lake, Stake Executive Secretary in Emery Stake, and on June 20, 1976 was ordained a High Priest and Bishop. He married Carol Ann Cox of Castle Dale and they have three children.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

THOMAS STEPHEN JOHNSON

1st Bishop of the Castle Dale Second Ward

I was born on June 5, 1937, in Consumers, Carbon County, Utah, the youngest child of Raymond Dewey and Lily Dale Hill Johnson. I have one sister and one brother: Betty Jean Johnson Wells born February 22, 1927, in Spanish Fork, Utah County, Utah, and Raymond Edward Johnson born February 24, 1931 in Cleveland, Emery, Utah. I have always looked upon my status in the family as the compromise baby as my mother went back home to her folks in Spanish Fork to give birth to my sister and went to my father's family home in Cleveland to give birth to my brother; but when I came along, she stayed home. Then to, the Thomas in my name is inherited from my maternal grandfather and the Stephen from my paternal grandfather. The doctor who attended me at birth was J. Eldon Dorman, who later became a prominent eye doctor in Price.

I have always been very proud of my family and my heritage. My paternal Grandfather, Stephen Johnson, was born in Reykjavik, Iceland, where he was adopted and later brought by his adopted parents to America to eventually settle in Cleveland, Emery County. My paternal Grandmother, Emma Ward, was born in Liverpool, England. She also immigrated to America with her parents where they also settled in Cleveland. Her Father, John Edward Ward, was a shop teacher, farmer, community and church leader in Cleveland for many years. Grandpa Ward was the one who gave me a name and a blessing.

My maternal grandfather, Thomas Hill, was also born in England, but my maternal grandmother, Ruth Elizabeth Raymond, is the only one of my grandparents with an American lineage. She was the first white girl to be born in Spanish Fork. The family has always said that she was of French-Canadian, Irish and American decent. Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin, is one of her progenitors. Therefore, I have always said that I am half English, $\frac{1}{4}$ Icelandic, and $\frac{1}{4}$ American or in other words a melting pot.

Consumers, Carbon County, Utah, was a coal mining camp which is not now inhabited. My father worked there for almost 25 years as a mine clerk. My earliest memories include: walking down the hill from the apartments to the office to see my Dad, playing in the yard and getting stung by stinging nettles, watching the trains on the sidehill coming out of the mine to dump coal in the bin, the noisy tippie operating, and loving the beautiful mountains of the area.

When I was six years old we moved to 2nd West and 1st South in Price mainly because my folks didn't like living in an apartment. After that my father commuted to the mine each day from Price. We moved to Price just in time for me to start the first grade. In the years to follow I received all of my basic education in Price. I attended first through third grades at the old Central Elementary School, fourth through sixth grades at the old Harding Elementary School, seventh through tenth grades at the old Price Junior High School, eleventh and twelfth grades at Carbon High, and completed two years of college offered at Carbon College. At that time the high school and the college students used the same building. Carbon College has since been changed

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to the College of Eastern Utah. I was graduated from Carbon High School in 1955 and from Carbon College with an Associate Degree in 1957

Though I received fourteen years of education in Price, thirteen years was as a bus student. We actually lived in Price only one year after moving down from Consumers. From there we moved to a farm in Carbonville, an unincorporated area just west of Price. We rented one farm for two years before my father purchased two acres of his own about two miles away in another part of Carbonville. My father had a rail road shack moved on to the property for us to live in until he could build. However, work in the mines began to slow down until Dad finally lost his job at Consumers. He was forced to seek various types of employment including construction and custodial work. Consequently, we lived in the rail road shack for eight years until Dad was able to buy a house that they were moving out of one of the mining camps and set it on our property.

Nevertheless, some of the most happy memories of my childhood stem back to when we were living in the railroad shack. We were poor but had a closeness that few other families had. We would often go to Moon Lake up in the Uintahs on fishing trips. My father and brother were excellent fishermen, but I never could quite develop the same expertise at fly fishing as they did.

During these years my sister married Ray Wells of Wellington and my brother was drafted into the Army and fought in the Korean Conflict. These were anxious days especially for my mother, and we were all releaved when my brother was rotated back home.

I was baptised on the 26 of August, 1945, by my father's brother, John Edgar Johnson. Uncle Edgar was the only member of my father's family who really stayed active in the church. He served as a member of several Bishoprics in the old Castle Gate Ward. My own parents were never active in the church until the Carbonville Ward was created in 1946. At that time my mother became very active as a primary teacher and has been faithful to all of her callings in the Church since that time.

The day that I was baptized was the first day that I ever remember going to Church. Though I did go occasionally when the Carbonville ward was created enough to be ordained a Deacon and a Teacher, I was never really active until I took L.D.S. Seminary in the tenth grade. I only took it because a few days before school started I seriously twisted my ankle and wasn't able to take PE.

I continually thank the Lord for this opportunity because the Seminary teacher in Price at that time was truly a man of God. His name was Rex L. Christensen. Since that time he has taught Seminary and Institute in Cedar City and Salt Lake. He did more toward changing the lives of my friends and me than any other person could have done. He was kind and yet firm in standing for high standards. In class we would be laughing with him one minute and weeping with him the next as we were touched by the sweet spirit of our Father in Heaven. After that first year it would have been difficult to keep me out of Seminary.

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In the eleventh grade, I took three Seminary classes; one before school, one during school, and one after school. I did this partly to make up for the year that I missed in the ninth grade. It was during this year that I first read the Book of Mormon. I have testified many times as I do now that the Holy Ghost at that time bore witness to me of the truthfulness of that Book.

While attending Carbon High and Carbon College I was a member of the debate team participating in many speech meets, one of which was held at the College of the Pacific in California. I was also a charter member of Lambda Delta Sigma an L.D.S. fraternity at Carbon College. I partially worked my way through Carbon College by working on campus as a custodian.

In the summer of 1957 I received a call to serve a mission for the Church in Denmark. I arrived there in September of that year and was privileged to represent the Church in Copenhagen, Esbjerg, Randers, Holstebro, Aalborg, and Herning before being honorably released in March of 1960. I learned to love the storybook land of Denmark and its people. My experiences there greatly strengthened my testimony of the Church. Language and cultural barriers make conversions in foreign lands much more difficult and though I was privileged to baptize only one sweet sister, I felt that I was instrumental in helping many to later accept the church.

In July of 1959, nine months before being released from my mission, my father died suddenly of a stroke. Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve just happened to be touring the mission at the time I received word of my father's death. He was a great source of personal comfort to me at that time. My family requested that I complete my mission before coming home, and I know that this is what Dad would desire.

I enrolled in the Brigham Young University in March of 1960 working part time on the B.Y.U. grounds. This together with the aid of a scholarship helped me to make it through my final two years of college. My brother was also a help to me at that time. Financially, I managed to barely make it through college without much of a social life. I remember that I had to park my car for weeks at a time because I didn't have money to buy gas. Nevertheless, I was able to graduate with honors in May of 1962 majoring in history and minoring in English.

Upon graduation I accepted employment with the L.D.S. Seminary program and taught for one year in Delta, Utah. At the end of the school year I joined the Utah National Guard in order to fulfill my military obligation at that time. Then to, I discovered that I was something less of a Seminary teacher than those that had taught me.

I spent six months of active duty in the Army, taking basic training at Fort Ord, California, and receiving Army engineer training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where I became a demolition specialist.

Returning from active duty I was employed shortly by the Utah Department of Highways until I began teaching at Price Junior High in August of 1964. I taught mathematics, English, and History for three years. The last year that I taught there was also the last year for the old building. It was

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torn down to make room for the new Mont Harmon Jr. High School. During this time I served as a member of the Seventies Presidency in the North Carbon Stake.

It was at a New Year's party, 1966, that I met Carol Ann Cox of Castle Dale. She was home for the holidays from attending B.Y.U. I met her on a blind date, but she happened to get matched up with one of the other fellows in the group. I didn't see her again until summer where we chanced to meet at Safeways in Price. We dated for a year before becoming married in the Manti Temple on August 11, 1967. Her companionship has to be the highlight of my life. I love her as much now as I did at that time, and her parents are just like real parents to me. I have often said that if I had shopped around for in-laws instead of a wife that I couldn't have done a finer job.

After marriage Carol Ann wanted to finish her education at B.Y.U., so I transferred to teaching 7th grade English at Central Jr. High located in South Salt Lake which is one of the schools in the Granite School District. We lived in Provo and I commuted to work each day.

On January 18, 1969, our first child was born at the Utah Valley Hospital in Provo. I was the very proud father of a girl that we named Heather.

Carol Ann had finished all of her schooling except for her final exams when Heather came along, so she was able to graduate in May of 1969.

The next fall we moved to Salt Lake and rented an apartment at 1067 Denver Street where we lived as I continued teaching.

In 1970 I accepted an English teaching position at South Emery Jr. High in Ferron. We were able to rent a house from Warren and Pearl Barton of Castle Dale before purchasing our own home at 95 North Center one year later. Shortly after moving into our new home, the size of our family increased by one. On November 13, 1971, our second daughter, Heidi Ann, was born in the Price City-County Hospital with nine minutes to spare after a speedy trip from Castle Dale.

During these years of moving my Church activity included being a Sunday School teacher in Provo, secretary to the Liberty Stake Quorum of Seventy in Salt Lake, and the teacher development leader in Castle Dale.

In January of 1972 I received a call to be the Stake Executive Secretary of the Emery Stake. One year later the name was changed to the Castle Dale Utah Stake. This position provided me an opportunity to work closely with members of the Stake Presidency and High Council. I gained a very high admiration and respect for Stake Pres. Donald R. Curtis. I was required to be away from home more than any previous calling that I had had in the Church. My wife at that time and since has supported me whole heartedly in these callings. I was to serve as Executive Secretary for 4½ years.

I also became acquainted with Shirl C. McArthur, President of the American Coal Company who was serving on the High Council at that time. With the apparent bright future for coal mining and the worsening conditions in the class room as far as teacher's salaries and loose discipline were

concerned I asked for and received employment at the American Coal Company. I began working there in June of 1974.

Our first son, Stephen Kenneth Johnson, was born on December 17, 1975. This time we had 15 minutes to spare after arriving at the Price Hospital. There is no conceivable Christmas present that I would rather have had. To receive a son in order to perpetuate the family name has long been one of my prayers.

In the early part of 1976 it became apparent that due to the growth of the community that the Castle Dale Ward would be divided. Though I had been privy to most of the things that was happening in the Stake because of my Exec. Secretary position the name of the recommended Bishop for the new Castle Dale Second Ward had been kept from me. What a surprise and a feeling of awesome responsibility when my wife and I were called into the Stake President's office and I was called to be the Bishop of the Castle Dale Second Ward. On June 20, 1976, the ward was divided. Bishop John L. Jorgensen was released, Bishop Doyle D. Barney was sustained as Bishop of the Castle Dale 1st Ward (East of Center Street) and I was sustained as Bishop of the Castle Dale 2nd Ward (West of Center Street). I was ordained a High Priest and a Bishop on that same day by Stake President, Donald R. Curtis.