



Lee & Connie Crayk

President Crayk served October 24, 1993 – April 20, 1997

Interviewed on November 19, 2017

All the good brethren on my right, in the reunion photo, served for quite a while—most about nine and a half years. I served as president of the stake only three and a half years. The general authority who came to reorganize the Willow Creek Stake in 1993 was Durell Woolsey, a former member of the first quorum of the seventy. You asked if I had any impressions about being called. I really didn't but I can tell you one thing I found interesting. We lived in the 9th ward, where I served as bishop. That fall, my ward was hosting stake conference and had the responsibility for setting up chairs and everything else. On Saturday morning I had my interview with Elder Woolsey and Elder Brown with all the other bishops and members of the high council. I remember how short that meeting was. Elder Woolsey didn't say a word to me beyond "hello." Elder Brown asked all the questions. I remember going home and telling my wife, "We're good Connie! It's not me!"

I went back to the stake to help set up chairs at 2 p.m. for the night meeting. I was setting up chairs when someone said, "Hey, I know who the next stake president is! Another man asked, "Who is it!" The first said, "He just pulled up in the parking lot with his wife. I've never told this story to anyone but my wife, but I knew the man they were talking about was not the man who'd been chosen as stake president. I didn't have any idea that it was going to be me, but I knew for sure that it wasn't going to be him.

I went home and 40 minutes later, I got a phone call asking me to come back, and the was extended. This was a life changing experience for me. I was told that they needed the names of my two counselors. "You have about five minutes to give us those names." I was under a lot of pressure because I hadn't thought about that and didn't have an inkling as to who they might be. So, Connie and I went into another room. My wife prayed and then I prayed. Elder Woolsey had said, "It will be the first two names that come to mind and you will know who the Lord wants. You may want to argue with that feeling! But don't. It will be the first two names that come to mind. I remember standing up and saying to my wife, "It's Bob Deeds and Michael Liljenquist!" Connie looked at me and said, "Those are the names that entered my mind as well."

I remember when my name was called the next day at stake conference. When I stood up, my seven-year-old daughter looked up at me and said, "Why him?" I felt the same way. Those three and a half years were such a blessing. I had the great good fortune to work with so many wonderful bishops and high council members. Jim Wilson, was my executive secretary. He's now a patriarch up north. Those were the finest bishops and high council members I've ever worked with. I was so naïve. I needed their experience and support.

Ray Ogden was sustained as the new patriarch on the same day I was called. I'd never met him before. As we walked off the stand I said to him, "It's an honor to be serving with you." Then I asked, "Who will be setting you apart?"

"Well I think that will be you," he replied. I had no idea I would be doing that.

We needed another patriarch. So, we made it a matter of fasting and prayer and Floyd Larsen's name came to me, just as my counselors' names had come to mind. This was another great opportunity to see the Lord's hand in this work. I remember Elder Woolsey saying to me after the meeting, "And you've been given the authority by the first presidency and the twelve to submit the name of the new bishop for the 9th Ward. I'll need that later tonight."

Keith Adams had been my counselor in the 9th ward bishopric and immediately his name came to mind. He had such a great influence on my life. He's much more than just a friend. President Adams was attorney for my business, he followed me as bishop, and as stake president.

As the new Stake President, I came to visit the third ward with a couple of purposes in mind. First, I wanted to meet some of the people and second, president Garner Meads had served as bishop for quite a while and it was time to make a change. I wanted to get a feel for what the Lord wanted to happen in third ward.

I remember being introduced to Brother and Sister Deacon in the hall. As I shook his hand and I introduced myself, he looked at me and said, "You don't have to introduce yourself to me president. I know exactly who you are. The Lord told me that you're the man he wants to lead the stake." To this day I am touched and humbled when I remember his comment. I was 41 years old at that time. I had been thinking, "Holy Cow! This usually happens to older men." To this day, remembering Brother Deacon's comment really touches my soul.

Supporting the Youth

As president of the Melchizedek priesthood in the stake I had a great love for all of the people. But as stake president, my focus was on the youth. I've always had a love for the youth and thought to myself, "If the youth are doing well their parents will be okay. At the time we were having general priesthood meetings on a stake level at 7:00 a.m. All my life I had been going to general priesthood meetings early in the morning. It was hard to get my sons out of bed that early. As we were organizing that meeting, I noticed that Mike Liljenquist had this look on his face so I asked, "Do you have something to offer?"

He said, "This early morning meeting, it's tough to get the youth there. Have you ever thought of having it later in the day? For those on the 1:00 p.m. block, priesthood meetings begin at 4:00 p.m. So, let's just count our stake meeting as their priesthood meeting and hold it then. (We only had one ward on the late schedule at the time.) Let's invite everyone and we will start the meeting at 4:30. We made that change and the next time we held Stake Priesthood meeting we had 220 more people come than normally attended.

We did a little bit of a change to the stake baptisms. We'd had priests and Laurel's in charge of those with young women leaders. They would direct the meetings, give the talks, take care of the music. We felt that was important as described in the 20th section of the Doctrine & Covenants. We had stake conferences for youth.

Baptisms

When I was bishop of the 9th Ward, President Johnson looked at me and said, "If you want to have a good ward, make sure your youth are happy and baptize someone. That kind of stuck with me. I want to tell you about one conversion that really touched me.

I was the home teacher to Al and Joann Pelton. Joann was always active in the church, Al was not a member. He was the man who started "Spud Nuts." When I visited him he always had his can of beer on his desk but he called me bishop and always let me come in. As I was ready to leave I'd always ask, "When are you going to be baptized?" He'd answer, "You'll be the first to know."

Now I've been called to be the stake president. President Adams was his bishop. I had been released. I got a call one day at the stake from Bishop Adams. He said, "Brother Pelton is in the hospital. He's had some heart related surgery, he's not doing very well. If you're going to see him you better go soon. He was in his 80's at the time. He was in the Alta View hospital so Terry Jensen, Bishop Adam's counselor, and I went to visit him.

When we walked into the room I could see that he was close to death. I remember saying, "Brother Jensen, you had better get ready to have a funeral in the next little while." That was on a Sunday. On Tuesday I stopped in to check on him. I walked into his hospital room. He was sitting up in bed. I was amazed. I knew he was a golfer so said, "Well Al, you look great. Do you want me to make a tee time?" He looked at me with a serious look on his face and said, "I need the missionaries and I need them today." That took me back because it was so out of character for him. "and you're going to get them here."

We made arrangements for the missionaries to come and teach him the gospel. He was baptized by one of his sons. Another son was in the font with them because they had to be very careful. They had to

wrap him in plastic because he still had some open wounds. They baptized him and it was like a day on Pentecost in his ward. He promised to tell me what happened from Sunday, when he was incoherent until Tuesday, but he never did. Whatever it was, it was extremely impactful to his life. I had him speak at the next Stake Conference. Maybe two or three months after he was baptized. I had given him five minutes but he went on and on. I turned to President Deeds and said, "How are we going to get him down?" There was a person who was not a member of the church that he had invited. After that conference they requested the missionaries. Al Pelton was a highly successful man in the business world. I heard when I was in Mexico that a year from the day he was baptized, he went to the temple and was sealed to his dear wife. Then he died a month later. We had others: The Flinns, others in your ward and throughout the stake. I knew that's what the Lord wanted to have happen. As a bishop and stake president I followed the counsel of President Johnson and he was absolutely right.

Genealogy and Family History

My wife Connie was a cheer leader at Brighton High School. Once a year she would get together with her cheerleading friends and their husbands. I remember coming home from work one night. Being stake president is demanding work. I was tired and looking forward to having a night by myself. But Connie said, "We are driving to Ogden to this dinner. By the way, there is this another couple that want to go with us. I had not put a lot of emphasis on Family History work. Leonard Shurtleff was on my high council and I knew there were others in the stake that were excellent at this. We picked them up and we were driving to Ogden. I'm driving. From the back seat the husband of this friend of my wife asks, "Well how is the family history work going in your stake?" My thought was, "Man, I'm going to have to spend two or three hours with this guy."

Then he explained, "Please don't take that the wrong way. I just felt prompted to ask that question." Larry McCray told stories all night about family history which got me interested and I began promoting the work in our stake.

I was released as Willow Creek Stake President to serve as President of the Monterrey Mexico Mission from 1997 through 2000. Since then I've served as President of the Peru MTC and then President of the Cochabamba Bolivia Temple. I currently serve as a sealer in the Draper Temple.