

Voices from the Past

History of the Eliza R. Snow Building and Ruffatti Pipe Organ

Interviewees: Julie and Darwin Wolford

January 14, 1984

Tape #107

Oral Interview conducted by Harold Forbush

Transcribed by: Tia Aucoin July 2007
Edited by: Aubrey Steffen March 2009

Brigham Young University- Idaho

Harold Forbush: A project of oral history of the Upper Snake River Valley of Idaho. The primary subject being considered is the Eliza R. Snow building on Ricks College campus acquires the Ruffatti pipe organ and the music enthusiasts of the entire Upper Snake River Valley should come to enjoy a zenith of music, love, and appreciation. It's my opportunity this 14th day of January, 1984 to be in the home of Brother and Sister Darwin and Julie Wolford who are involved with the faculty, music faculty, of Ricks College. And we are going to be considering the primary subject just mentioned. First of all, Mrs. Wolford, will you indicate for the record when and where you were born and a little something about your background, just a rather brief statement. How you came to Ricks maybe to Rexburg. If you want you can either make a little comment about how you met Darwin.

JW: Okay. I was born in Salt Lake City in 1950 and at age four moved to Missoula, Montana where I grew up. I'm the oldest of four children. I come from a very musical family. My mother plays the violin, studied with the Roy Robertson and teaches violin and all of the children in our family are very musical, playing violin, cello, and piano. I came to Ricks in the fall of 1968, in the fall of 1968 and as a music major studying voice and private piano. And I met Darwin in music theory class. He was my professor in music theory and we were engaged by Thanksgiving and married in the spring and was the talk of the campus.

HF: But people were excited for you.

JW: Oh, yes.

HF: I'm sure. And then now you're a mother of four children I think you mentioned.

JW: Yes. We have-

HF: Five children.

JW: -Children.

HF: And you're working as a registered nurse and a-

JW: Yes, I went back to school about five years ago part time to get my RN from Ricks College and I graduated almost two years ago.

HF: Do you have an opportunity of you called upon to, to provide, share your music expertise?

JW: Oh, yes.

HF: From time to time?

JW: Plenty of opportunity for that in the church and I also have taught private piano for what, 15 years?

Darwin Welford: Um-hm.

HF: That's great. That's wonderful. Now, Brother Welford if you will share with us something about your background. Where and when you were born and something about your parents, your musical background, and stop at that point.

DW: I was born in Logan, Utah in 1936 and grew up in Logan and eventually went to Utah, the University of Utah to study and with some problems with my health I had to return home and for a couple of years I took classes at both Utah State and the University of Utah. Finally graduated from Utah State and then returned to the U and got a Master's Degree and then in 1967 graduated with a PhD. And at that time I was employed by Ricks College and I've lived here ever since. My parents-

HF: How do you spell the last name for the record?

DW: W-O-L-F-O-R-D.

HF: That's, that's English isn't it?

DW: Actually it's Swiss or German.

JW: It's been anglicized, hasn't it? I was looking at your genealogical records.

DW: Yeah, we've seen it spelled W-O-H-L-F-A-H-R-T and a few other ways...

HF: I see.

DW: But it's a German name ultimately. My mother was a Lamiral and the Lamiral family for a hundred years or more has been a very musical family. To this day there is a Lamiral symphony orchestra in Paris and from time to time I see in record catalogs recordings by them and so I think my musical interests and talent have come quite naturally. But my mother was orphaned when she was fairly young and grew up being tossed from one relative to another. My father and hence I should say her education stopped when she was in the 9th grade. My own father came from a very, very impoverished background in the Appalachian area of Pennsylvania the mines, coal mines, and he came from a large family, part of whom had become interested in the Mormon church and the other part had become very, very polarized against the church and those in the church you join. So anyway, my father left home and began life with an 8th grade education and he came west and the two of them had, what they had in common was just essentially that they were both very poor people. Poor in spirit and poor in education and poor in about everything you can imagine.

HF: So they didn't share a musical background?

DW: Well we had music in the home.

HF: Your father and mother, home.

DW: But, and they provided lessons for me but their, and considering what they had to offer, it was really quite miraculous that any in the family should really amount to anything. And my father was very proud of his family because his fulfillment in life is really seeing his children accomplish things that he could not.

HF: Did you show an aptitude for music real early then?

DW: I started piano lessons when I was at eight, age eight, and at a very early age I began composing little songs and they were very poor because I didn't know a thing about music theory, but the interest was there. And the interest grew; it never did wane at all.

HF: Well now, what were, what were the circumstances under which you came to Ricks? The inducements and so forth.

DW: I had never in my life been in Rexburg, Idaho until the day that I began to work here for the college. And the year that I was completing my doctorate I had completed and submitted applications to a number of institutions in various places in the United States who were looking for musicians with doctorate degrees. At the same time Ruth Barrus, who had been in the music department at Ricks was having some problems with her hips and so physically she was trying to get out of the organ teaching. It was very difficult for her to get around and very difficult to play. The college and then the humanity department is growing and became the logical thing for her to move into the one thing. So the college officials went to Alexander Schreiner and said whom shall we hire? And Alexander Schreiner said you should hire Darwin Wolford and I was his only recommendation and so I received a phone call from well, Hugh Bennion was one and had received phone calls from Chester Hill who was then the department head and asked me if I was interested and for some reason Ricks College did not sound very exciting to me and I was very slow to fill out those applications and the other institution looked more and more exciting and in the meantime while they were still talking to Alexander Schreiner and he said no, you should call Darwin Wolford and ultimately every one of the other job application or jobs fell through. They were filled and so I came to Ricks as a last resort and I, there was some circumstances that were kind of interesting at the first. I used to work for the general music committee for the church and I had gone out in approximately 200 stakes of the church and taught classes in conducting and in organ playing. I'd gone from Tucson, Arizona to Los Angeles to Nyssa, Oregon, to Denver and San Francisco and Panguitch, Utah. Well anyway, the very last summer before I was to accept employment then as a professor of music some place the church had a summer full of work for me. I'd completed my exams, etc in the vicinity of around May 1, and I was glad to have the employment for the summer even though the salary that the church paid me was not very good. It was, it was better than that of a student and anyway, I got to

Snowflake, Arizona and the stake president said we want to have the date of your classes completed by August 15. They had previously set up a class that would've run into September and almost every school in the country starts about the middle of September. Ricks College started way early and the, so anyway we began to condense those classes and I was a little disappointed because it went approximately 30 days less employment for me and I had borrowed my way through the last year of school and as it turned out after I had accepted the employment here they announced the date that I had to start teaching, and it was the Monday after the Saturday night of the final class in Snow Flake. And I felt that it was no coincidence that the stake president in Snowflake, Arizona should want to move that ahead while it was necessary for me to be done at that day you know, to come to Ricks because it fit the schedule very well. So I came to Ricks College and I was single and Julie came the following year and we were married and had a child the following year. His name was Christopher. And he passed away at four months and he's buried in the cemetery and after we had buried our first child in the cemetery north of town, all of a sudden we realized that our roots were now here and this is where we belonged. And my ties with the college became stronger and more intimate and subsequently I became involved as a member of the general music committee the church about five years ago and it turns out that I was called to be a member of the general music committee. I was employed by them but I was not a member for many years.

HF: Are there several members on that committee?

DW: There are approximately ten members now.

HF: What did they, they represent some of the church institutions in part as well as-

DW: No.

HF: Just private persons called.

DW: No, no. The church music committee has people that represent specific needs. Now my work has to do with the editorial music, the music that is to be published. There is a woman whose specialty is children's music. There's another woman who's on the committee who's a specialist in various foreign languages and she's involved in anything that involves publications for other countries and someone who's a specialist in choir music etcetera. So the needs are based on requirements that we have. But anyways as I began to work at Ricks it became very clear to me that I had a more typical situation here at Ricks College with a small town than the other members of the committee who live in Provo or Salt Lake City and it's interesting that the brethren of the church are always saying simplify and we're working on the new hymnal right now. The musicians of the church are always wanting to have a more sophisticated hymn book. But the brethren say no, we want it simplified. And everything else has to be simplified. And I would guess that as a general rule the students that I teach at Ricks are less gifted. Some are very gifted but we go all the way to the students who have very limited amount of talent. But I have had to deal with students that are not very talented and I think that has given me a perspective on the music that the church has published and I have to prepare for

publication then the other people, professional musicians who live in Provo and Salt Lake who see things from an Ivory Tower point of view.

HF: Well now the brethren see it, or you see it from the brethren's point of view more simplified.

DW: Oh, yes.

HF: Who, who, who would be the spokesman for the quote "the brethren" end quote?

DW: Well I deal directly with brother Michael Moody who is chairman of the general music committee and he works directly under Hugh Pinnock, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. And I've forgotten just exactly what his chain of command is but ultimately there is a chain of command that leads to the First Presidency and if I'm not mistaken, Mark E. Peterson who died about two days ago was somewhere in that chain of command.

HF: I see.

DW: He's been very concerned about music and been involved in it and been advisor to the general music committee at one time or another.

HF: Now you had mentioned that it was primarily the sort of the strong council of the former and primary organist for the church, Alexander Schreiner that, that recommended you to come to Ricks. Was that on the basis of maybe you being a student of his?

DW: I was his student and Alexander Schreiner was a well, we developed just a special relationship in addition to being his student I became his very close friend and I was in his home very frequently and very often. We would do things together, go places together. One year his wife was in Europe for several months and so he needed somebody around just for companionship and so ever so often I'd just spend an evening over with Brother Schreiner at his apartment and but he was very well, I'll tell you something else. Early in my days as a student of Alexander Schreiner's I had said to him that I had wanted to study with him but his fee was high, obviously, because he's probably the most famous organist in America at the time and one of the most popular radio performers in the entire country of various polls from year to year would list him among the top two or three of the most popular artists. But-

HF: He reduced his high fees. (laughs)

DW: But anyway I'd asked him, I said I-you know I just wish that I could afford to study with him and when he realized it that my finances were not terribly good he said one day he said I studied with John J. McClellan who was a former tabernacle, or was it Edward P. Kimball, I'd forgotten which?

HF: McClellan.

DW: He said Brother, it was one of those two men who'd offered him free lessons for as long as he cared to study and he said I do this on with two stipulations: Number one that you keep it confidential because he said I don't want credit for having done this. And the second thing is I'd liked you to do it for somebody else some day. So he said in offering these free lessons to you, he said, I'm already fulfilling the promise I made to Brother McClellan or Kimball, whichever the case was.

HF: Um-hm.

DW: And so from then on I studied with him for a number of years and never paid him a penny for my instruction.

HF: Is it to be assumed, Brother Wolford, that maybe your style is reflected from his style?

DW: I am sure that he was one of the major- I'd studied with Robert Cundick who was also a tabernacle organist, and other people, but Alexander Schreiner was a, well there are two people in my professional training who were major influences and certainly Alexander Schreiner was. Both as an organist and as an improviser. And I learned to improvise very well. And very few people do that. The other person was Leroy Robertson who has been, in fact he died about the same time as our son Christopher and as a composer he was the major shaping influence in my composition and I think ultimately that possibly was where I got the training that I needed to fulfill my responsibilities now as the editor for the church. And in fact we have a son-

HF: On the, on the music general church music committee?

DW: Yes. Yes. And we have a son whose middle name is Leroy, Andrew Leroy because of my love for that great man. And we'd even talked about another son sometime having a middle name of Alexander but we ran out of children to give middle names to about that point so-

HF: (laughs) Well that's interesting. Now of course I think one of the, of the great and wonderful exciting times for Ricks College and the performing arts is when they, when word got about, around that they were going to erect a, a building up here for the performing arts.

DW: Um-hm.

HF: I, I know I was very personally excited about it. Do you have something you can share for the record concerning this building? Did you have, did you play any part in its design or it's planning? Who else was involved? Etc.

DW: I would certainly not want to take all the credit and all the glory for the organ that now is there because there were a number of individuals who had major influence in the

decision to one day put a fine organ in that building. Not the least of whom is Ruth Barrus because Ruth had taught here for years and years and years and had a tremendous following of not only organ students but people who learn to love the sound of the pipe organ from her influence. And at the time that I soon after I came here Henry Eyring succeeded John L. Clark as president of the college and he brought with him as a vice president Harry Maxwell. Harry Maxwell had a deep interest in the organ and his wife is an organist and anyway, it was approximately 19, well, in the early 70's we had begun to draw proposals for what would be in this new fine art's building and administration gave the full blessing to design a concert hall around a pipe organ and Harry Maxwell and Ruth Barrus and I had made several trips to California and Oregon and other places to listen to pipe organs and we talked to organ builders and acousticians and so on and some people visited our campus and they recommended a size of a building for the best acoustics for an organ. They recommended a certain size for the organ chamber and a specific things that went in to the actual design of the hall and I think it's quite interesting that when the organ was, or when the building was built there was an organ loft above the stage. It was empty for a year or two until the organ finally came and after we had built the building, and of course we had built it around the specifications of size and acoustics and so on. We had decided that a Ruffatti would best meet our needs and representatives of the Ruffatti company then had come to the building and taken copies of the blueprints and designed an organ with the exact space involved and architecturally they wanted the design that had a modernistic flare because the building is rather modern in, in the way it's designed. The concert hall has geometric acoustical shapes. I don't know how to describe them but anyway, the, the organ fits the hall like a hand in the glove and at one point Francesca Ruffatti flew over from Italy and measured the organ loft and he said I have the plans at home. But he said on one occasion they had plans from church and he said there was an inch discrepancy between the plans and the actual building when it was completed and he said when they designed an organ right to the last, you know, 16th of an inch he said it really made a mess for them. So he said never again did he rely on those plans alone so he measured down to the last 16th of an inch. So literally our organ has been designed for this particular hall acoustically and every other way.

HF: Were there other makes or designs of organs that are being, that are, you know that are used and built that perhaps played a part in presenting a choice between or among, among the Ruffatti and, and other organs? In other words, why if there were others, why was the Ruffatti chosen?

DW: There are a couple of reasons and number one, as you know the Italian people love to sing. It's the land that gave birth to opera and the language itself has been an inspiration to sing because it's a very musical language, even when it's spoken. And the Italian country gave birth to the violin and inspired the Stradivarius and Guenarius families to build those exquisite instruments that have never been surpassed. Well, there is a singing quality to a Ruffatti that one rarely hears. The closest thing to a Ruffatti sound is the Aeolian-Skinner organ. There's one in the Salt Lake Tabernacle but that company has gone out of business. They are no longer in existence but there's that wonderful singing sound in the Aeolian-Skinner from the Tabernacle as is in various other important churches across the United States. And in fact many organs screech and

groan and moan and scream and do anything but sing but there's a refinement in this Italian-made organ that is rarely found and this beautiful singing sound, it's very hard to define and very hard to pinpoint, but many people have agreed with me and noticed my observation. But there's something else that's a little more tangible and just that. Today I'd say probably in the last 30 or 40 years there's been kind of a Renaissance in organ building and people have wanted to build organs in the Baroque style which is the style that where Bach lived in the 18th century and before. Now in those days they had no electricity so the organ had to be run mechanically. Well anyway, there is an intellectual fad where people are designing organs just exactly the way they did then as close as they possibly can. One colleague of mine in a neighboring institution is gone so far in trying to be authentic that for some reason which remains a mystery to me he said that Bach, he didn't think used his thumb when he played, which I think is a bunch of baloney and he has gone to great lengths to re-finger all the works of Bach so that you did not use the thumb and he thinks that Bach didn't use the heel for reasons which also remain a mystery and he's gone through the works of Bach and he has his students study Bach without the use of the heel. Well, I think it's just as strange as strange. But Schreiner was a very eclectic organist. His tastes were very broad and the romantic music of the 19th century constituted a very important part of the organist's repertoire but in the last 40 or 50 years across the country the Baroque music has eclipsed all of this great music of the 19th century and I was very, very anxious when we made such an investment to have an investment that would not be a fad and that would outlast this fad. And I see the pendulum already starting to swing back away from the baroque organ to the middle of the road organ but the Ruffatti's philosophy has always been that of building a very eclectic organ that can play any kind of literature. And on the dedication recitals we selected pieces of music that went to gambit from very baroque things to very modern and romantic things and harps and chimes and everything else.

HF: Did the college here in the last analysis have the opportunity to select the organ that they wanted.

DW: There's an interesting situation that developed. As we began our investigation of various organs, the organ committee consisted of Ruth Barrus and myself and Harry Maxwell who was then the academic vice president and after Henry Eyring left Ricks College for one year Harry Maxwell became acting president but about the time that the crucial decisions had to be made Ruth Barrus became ill with cancer and Harry Maxwell was called on a mission to preside as mission president in Brazil. Well, I was the remaining member of that committee and everyone else had either left the country or passed away. And so the burden decision was mine. Bruce Hafen has come and since now become president and he has been interested in the organ because he's an organist and pianist himself but one of his great strengths as a leader is that he allows everyone to exercise the authority of his own stewardship. He was very supportive. But Ruth and Harry all agreed in with me in their interest in the Ruffatti organ except that they had left at the time when the decisions did have to be made.

HF: They had been exposed to-

DW: Yes.

HF: the musical singing.

DW: And they had felt the same about the organ.

HF: About the characteristics of that organ, I see...

DW: One thing that we should talk about somewhat probably is that the organ, I mean the building had far exceeded the, the original cost estimate and when the building had actually been completed and it had gone like 2 ½ or 3 million dollars over the original estimation well, the brethren of the church at that point said it, all of the extras in the building had to be donated. The funding had to come from private donations and so there was a point where I was given the choice of either raising the money or not having an organ and at this point I'd like to have my wife talk a little bit about her feelings for the organ and the Ruffatti because we, we'd had some experiences which made it a very easy choice for us to want to raise the money.

HF: Julie, please.

JW: I guess mostly it was just the gorgeous sound. I went to San Francisco with Darwin on an occasion and heard the Ruffatti in St. Mary's and we went down the coast to LA and heard a big one in Robert Schuller's Cathedral and the sound, it was so totally different than anything I had ever heard. It was just, it was magic. And it was just, it became a very kind of a spiritual witness almost that this was the right thing to do, that this was the way we should be going, that really only a Ruffatti would do.

HF: Now, does your ear distinguish the Ruffatti from the tabernacle? Mormon Tabernacle choir? Or the Mormon Tabernacle organ?

JW: Yes, they sound, they sound different.

HF: Do they?

DW: They're more-

JW: They're very similar in many ways in the romantic sound and was- but the Ruffatti is, sounds different on the baroque things it has more kick I think. More kick and more fire than the tabernacle organ does on the baroque sound. It's a magnificent instrument.

HF: And that experience, listening experience in those, those two edifices convinced you personally.

JW: Absolutely.

HF: And I guess you, you were with her?

DW: Yes.

HF: And you both-

DW: And we were willing to-

HF: Agreed (laughs]

DW: To, to, to do the work. And I never raised-

JW: If we, if we hadn't had this commitment and this determination that this had to be the instrument, there's no way we could have gone out and raised the money for it. I don't-

HF: Now before you commenced and launched this fundraising effort, which turned out to be a real personal witness to both of you what a wonderful work you people did in raising that money, before that launching occurred, had the organ been ordered?

DW: No, in fact the church would not allow Ricks College to, to make any commitment to an organ company whatsoever until the money was in hand. And the tragedy of our circumstance was that inflation was raising the price of the organ faster than we were almost able to raise it. Raise the money. But, in the first place I, of course Julie and I worked as a team but there was a wonderful individual who cannot receive enough admiration and appreciation from us. Lavere Ricks who has now been dead about what one year? Two?

HF: Or a little more, um-hm. Yeah.

DW: But I felt very strongly that as a fundraising committee we should have somebody who is very well acquainted in the community and was well respected. And Lavere Ricks loved organ music and he came to even the student recitals and he was always sitting there and, and I just felt that he was a man that we should have. So I approached Bruce Hafen about asking him as an assignment from the college to assist us and Brother Ricks agreed to do this and so essentially Lavere Ricks and Julie and I managed to do this.

HF: When was your campaign launched? Do you have a date?

DW: About-

JW: It was-

DW: 1975 or 6 maybe. Some place in that vicinity. Bruce Hafen said if, well would have been just a little bit well, some, mid, the mid 70's I'm not sure. Well let's see, 1977 was when it really got into-

JW: After we became so totally committed it was this summer of '77.

DW: But Bruce Hafen said and is so very supportive. He said, made a wonderful suggestion. He said let's announce that we will have a plaque on the organ listing the donors or the gift is minimum of \$100. And he said that will be an incentive for people to want to contribute because then there would be a permanent recognition of their contribution and as it turned out eventually the gifts on the organ rather conveniently started coming in and either \$100 checks or \$500 or-

JW: That's what we kind of asked for.

DW: \$1,000. And so it finally turned out that the administration agreed that we could categorize them not with the dollar amounts on the plaque but with names and size of print or something. So anyway, we proceeded to go after people. Julie and I would pray before we'd go to bed and before we'd turn out the light, we always had a pad of paper by our bed and we'd, just before we'd turn out the light add two or three more names of people that we would think of.

HF: In the Rexburg area or-

DW: Everyplace.

HF: Everyplace (laugh)

JW: Any, all of our-

HF: Missoula, Montana.

JW: [undistinguishable]...you bet. Anybody we could think of that we thought we could approach.

HF: I see.

JW: Whether- and these were, we didn't know. We didn't think we knew any wealthy people. There were mostly people just like us middle class, you know, and just approaching them and asking them we figured, you know, if we asked for \$100 minimum that would be fine. Most people can handle that if they really want to. And that's the way we went after it.

DW: The first letter I wrote was to a lady in Mesa, Arizona and I knew she was fairly well fixed and I asked her for a \$1,000 gift for the organ. It was very hard to do. I, the hardest thing I ever did in my life is start asking people for money. But we did discover that it was better to ask for a specific amount than to say can you help us. Well, so I wrote her a letter. And this was the very first letter, the morning after a meeting with President Hinckley, or we had agreed on all of these things. Well, in a few days I received a letter in the mail from this dear lady with the check for \$1,000. She said I'm

retired now and she said this is the first time in my life that I've literally given 'til it hurts. She said I believe in what you're doing and here's \$1,000 to help you out.

HF: You laid a background of what you needed?

DW: Um-hm.

HF: The Ruffatti organ was mentioned-

DW: Yes.

HF: And these things.

DW: And the gifts came from everyplace. Well, an interesting story happened or took place. The American agent for the Ruffatti Company is Ted Allen Worth. And his headquarters is San Francisco. And Ted wrote on a number of occasions he said- [tape ends]

HF: Side two continuing the interview with Brother and Sister Darwin Welford. Okay.

DW: I went to the bookstore and bought a copy of my organ method book and some other publications because I wanted to send them to Verna Johnson and show her what we were doing at Ricks with the organ department. And anyway, two weeks went by and I received a letter from Verna and she said that she appreciated the music and was impressed and she said in fact I was so excited when I saw this I got on the plane and flew down to Los Angeles because I have a friend, Donna Turner Smith, who is a concert pianist and in the very same mail came a letter from Donna Turner Smith. She's probably the finest female pianist in the entire church and one of the greatest pianist period in the church.

HF: Were both these people members of the church then?

DW: Yes, um-hm.

HF: Donna and-

DW: And Verna Johnson.

HF: And Verna Johnson were members, I see.

DW: Well, anyway, Verna or Donna had written to me. She said would you consider writing a concert piece for me based on a hymn melody or hymns with which I could use as a sort of an encore but as a benediction to a recital when I play for an LDS audience? And she said now this is just one title "God Be With You Til We Meet Again" which is not a very easy piece to work with because the melody consists of a lot of repeated notes and it is [hums the song] ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta- is not a very easy melody to arrange

because of all the repetition of the notes. Well, in the meantime I had had a contract submitted to me by a publishing company. The only time in my life that a publisher has actually sent me a contract with a title on it asking me to produce something with that title. So anyway, so I called the publisher on the phone and I explained this interesting story. I said I would be willing to write a, say a group or medley three pieces or something for her. If you're interested in publishing them, the least I could do is to write something that you would publish and we would use titles that you would feel good about publishing. And I said the lady said to me "God Be With You" and he said you know, that would go over at funerals and missionary farewells and my wife was standing beside me and she said ask Jerry about "Though Deepening Trials." And I said what about "Though Deepening Trials?" And he said perfect. And then he said what about "The Lord is My Shepherd?" Why don't you make a group of three that could be played separately or together. But he said I'd rather publish them, I'd rather publish them separately. So I proceeded to write the three pieces. When I got to "Though Deepening Trials" I continued to think of a friend, Donna Turner Smith. I mean, Lila Stephan who lived in Los Angeles who had lost a son about three years before with Hodgkin's disease so finally I just felt that I had to dedicate a piece to Lila Stephan. So I called Donna and I said would you- even though the pieces were written at your invitation, I feel I should dedicate "Though Deepening Trials" to Lila Stephan and she said fine. So we sent Lila a Xerox copy of the piece the minute it was finished and anyway, Lila called me and when I sent the music to her I sent a very quick little letter and I said here is something that I wanted to do in memory of Keith but I said we're raising money for an organ and I said my time is limited so forgive the brevity of the letter. Then I said P.S. and this is one of the few times where I actually asked for money but not a specific amount. And I thought that Lila and George Stephan were not particularly well-to-do. I mean, I knew they weren't hurting but I didn't really know what they really had. So I said could you help? Question mark, end of letter. So she called us a few days later and she loved the piece and she said we want to help you. She said how much money are you looking for? And I said at that time we were looking for \$150,000 and I didn't know where we stood and I thought we might be possibly half-way by then. And she lowered her voice, she said you know, we could, we could afford to buy the whole organ for you if George had a mind to do it. But she said George is not a member of the church and George is very, very careful where he spends his money. Well, that, I will eliminate the several months, six months that, five months that took place after that, but we will make the story short. In five months George and Lila Stephan had signed over to Ricks College a trust amounting to way over \$100,000. Now the trust is not actually the full-cash value unless the two should die but it made enough of a difference that we could actually complete our project. But George and Lila decided to go to Europe and visit the Ruffatti factory, which they did. And while they were there George thought he wanted to make a memorial to his son and he said I think we should move from a three manual organ to a four and so when he got back he said let's, let's expand that organ to four manuals.

HF: Was he quite knowledgeable in music himself...

DW: Only because his wife was a concert pianist.

HF: I see.

DW: And he loved music and he loved what Lila did but he really didn't know very much about it. But he persuaded us to move to a four manual console and then spend as much as we could towards the completion of four manuals. Well, we proceeded in this direction and then George proceeded to work up a second gift and this gift was a cash gift now and over \$100,000 and that with everything else we raised allowed us to spend a gift that was in the vicinity of \$300,000. It was considerably more than that. And it's an interesting thing that it was the Stephan's' which made us, made it possible to go for a large instrument and the circumstances under which we were able to get the gift from the Stephan's was kinda like a domino game. Ted Worth had suggested we go to Vernon, Vernon had gone to Donna Turner Smith and the publisher was involved in this and I hesitate, I mean, I hate to think what would have happened if anyone of the steps had not taken place at the right time and the right spot. But everything fell into place. Now, the organ is completed as far as the three manuals are concerned. But we have the four manual console and I am optimistic that one day we will still finish the entire project even though at this moment we do not have the fourth manual completed. But that- and in the meantime a lot of other money has continued to come in from people in town and people outside of the city and great distances away.

HF: Well now, coming to this great event, the arrival of the organ and putting my question in that way means that you had signed a contract. Ricks College had made arrangements then to order and to purchase the Ruffatti?

DW: Yes. And as a matter of fact, we had well, we had signed one contract for about \$150,000 and locked in the price on that portion of the organ and that would have been the two manuals or something. And we went to see Ruth Barrus who was just at the point where her mind was no longer capable of understanding what was going on because the cancer was getting into her brain and lung...

HF: Um-hm.

DW: Well, anyway and I went over there one day and I played for her the three pieces I had written and told her the story and told her that we had signed a contract at that point. And it was only a matter of weeks until her mind had just gone, left. And then finally of course, she just died. But then after the completion of the other Stephan gift, we had another large amount of money and then we renegotiated on the second installment so we had worked up two different contracts and one was an addendum to the first so and then we decided to have that much organ come when it could. And as additional money is ready then we will finish off the fourth manual and then have that come at a time when we can afford to have it.

HF: But monies are even at this date being received which will go towards the eventual completion?

DW: Yes. In fact, just last week a lady in Los Angeles, total stranger, sent me a check for \$400 and I have no idea how people get wind of the organ. Forgive the reference there, the wind, but, I guess the organ is strong enough that the wind travels great distances (laughs) but the money's still coming in and I have no doubt that it will be completed. At this moment it is still a very large organ and a very successful organ but it will be even better when it's finished.

HF: Now, Dr., when did the organ arrive at Ricks?

DW: The organ left Italy well, let's see. Not quite a year ago. It would have left Italy about March or April of last year 1973.

HF: '83. 1983.

DW: And it came, went first to Holland and then traveled across the Atlantic on a Dutch Freighter, and then came through the Panama Canal and the coast of California and came by Semi. It arrived about May 1st of last spring and then the crew installed the organ during the summer and they spent all summer installing. And then of course we had the glorious four days of organ dedication in November.

HF: On the third, fourth, fifth.

DW: And sixth.

HF: And sixth. And of November, how was it that you were able to get the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to come? Who figured in that? And that achievement?

DW: Well, of course we wanted to do something very significant. The college realized that we had never on campus ever raised that amount of money for a project and you know when, well, there's a statement in the bible that says where your treasure is there will your heart be also. And when people give of themselves they're interested then in where their money has gone. So the college realized that we were gonna have interest by virtue of the fact that so many people- there were something like 350 people who had given \$100 and more. So they were anxious to capitalize on the public relation's value of the organ dedication. And one of the college administration thought gee, maybe the choir, maybe they would come. And it took a lot of negotiation and of course, that was successful in arranging for them to come. It was a little bit difficult to come and to broadcast on the new organ because you had technical problems in connecting up to a CBS hookup but-

HF: KRXX Radio was very anxious to be cooperative, I'm sure.

DW: Yeah, it was actually channel or I mean KID in Idaho Falls who was the CBS station that helped us make the CBS contact there.

HF: I see. Now-

DW: And it was carried, the broadcast was actually carried by about 500 stations, most of whom probably I guess are CBS stations. But a number of radio stations across the country are not CBS affiliates but apparently syndicate, receive the syndication broadcast rights to those. So there were over 500 radio stations that carried that live.

HF: TV did not.

DW: That is correct. It became too costly. It was not feasible. A number of television stations carry the syndicated television performance of this and they had to pre-tape the television program from the tabernacle and released to those stations but that just- we were lucky to get the radio coverage but it was just not possible to do a television performance.

HF: Now the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of-

DW: Gerald Ottley.

HF: Gerald Ottley and his assistant is Brother Riplinger.

DW: Um-hm.

HF: And the organist officially coming here was Longhurst?

DW: John Longhurst played the broadcast the night before we had a concert in the Hart Building with two performances and they used a grand piano with four hand accompaniments arranged and both Longhurst and Robert Cundick supplied the accompaniment there. Then at the dedicatory service which followed the broadcast Robert Cundick played the one choral selection and so we involved both of those two men.

HF: And you played more than one.

DW: I played the concluding. I played of course the Thursday night performance. And then I played the concluding number which was a hymn "The Spirit of God the Fire is Burning" where the congregation joined the choir. And that was my idea to end with that particular hymn and let the congregation join with the Tabernacle Choir and I felt that would be a great thrill for the congregation to sing with the Tabernacle Choir and the new organ, which it was.

HF: Now, Dr. Wolford, the event of the dedicatory services covering a four day period, the third fourth, fifth of which was on a Saturday and the sixth with the special dedication services etcetera and the broadcast over the radio stations over America, do you have any idea as to the attendance, the significance, the public relations that went from Ricks College?

DW: I cannot give you specific figures but the Barrus Concert Hall seats 700 and we had double performances of the concert. The dedicatory concert which was mine on Thursday night, Ted Allen Worth's inaugural concert on Friday night, and they were essentially full both nights. And the Hart seats about 5,000 and we had two performances Saturday night of the Tabernacle Choir and they were essentially full. There were seats available at both but essentially they were full houses. The Sunday morning of course we could have filled that auditorium three or four times I think, the number of people that wanted to get in there. And so there were many people there and just for instance, there was a family that traveled out here from Minnesota to participate and there was a family from British Columbia that came here to participate and there were people from Phoenix and Los Angeles and great distances across the United States.

HF: The media gave you excellent-

DW: Yes.

HF: Press and publicity.

DW: Yes. Yes. And I think that it helped the college a great deal that way because we have had a feature article in this People magazine. We have had a feature article this month in the Ensign which we have never had before. We've had a good article in the church news and as Bruce Hafen is fond of saying, Ricks College is one of the best kept secrets in the church and he's wanted so much to let the church know what we have at Ricks College. And so the organ has been a vehicle for coverage in the news media which we would not have had otherwise. He and other members of the administrative team of the college have said this on various occasions that we have just simply never had a more successful PR event than the organ dedication in terms of numbers of people who have come, the distances that have come, the amount of money that has been given to finance a project and even though the Stephan gift was by far the largest gift, the hundreds of people that had given everything from \$10 on up, you know, is just tremendous. And I don't think we can point to one project on the campus that's expensive and say this was financed completely by donation as we can this organ. So that's a tribute to many people even though Julie and I and Lavere Ricks had a great deal to do with that even so in many cases we would say the spirit of the Lord certainly prompted the people to want to give. We, we just happened to do the leg work.

HF: Now, what about the organ and the chance of having our people in the Upper Snake River Valley get to know more about the organ and have it influence their lives? What do you envision that may take place?

DW: Now, immediately we began last semester a weekly noon recital, a 30 minute recital. We did this on Fridays and this semester the music department felt that Wednesday might possibly be a better day so this semester now we're having a weekly recital at 12:15 on Wednesday's. Students and townspeople who are accomplished organists are able to play those recitals. Our attendance has been very meager as of yet but we've not had good weather. I think gradually the word will get around that we are

doing these recitals and we hope that the organists will prepare themselves for the opportunity of playing and they will have the opportunity when they're prepared. We hope that the townspeople will take advantage of those opportunities to hear the organ. Eventually I hope with the additional, with the new FM station that the college is I think we are going into full swing next fall with the added power, 10,000 watts or whatever it is I think it'll-

HF: 75.

DW: Whatever it is.

HF: Thousand

DW: We will be broadcasting this.

HF: Live.

DW: And incidentally we've started a number of concerts, a series this spring. This coming Thursday night Dr. Joyce Jones who is one of the greatest organists in the entire world will present a concert and she is an incredible organist and a lovely lady. In February Thomas Richner, who is an organist at the Mother Church of Christ Scientist in Boston, will play. In March Clay Christiansen who is the newest of the Tabernacle organists will play and we hope to have, and the price on these is so reasonable that it's just almost dirt cheap. And I think that we will attract artists of the finest caliber and hopefully why our townspeople will take advantage of the opportunity of hearing the organist but some of the greatest organists in the world play here for us.

HF: Dr. Wilford, I want you to know that I appreciate the kindest that you've shown my wife and me in this whole involvement and we do appreciate this involvement that we've had in helping a little way and helping a little bit in bringing about this wonderful accomplishment and we sincerely pray that your dreams and aspirations will be realized as we look into the future and that the organ will play a great role as you would like to envision at this time. I thank you sincerely for the opportunity of allowing me to come to your home this Saturday, the 14th of January, 1984 that we might place on the record some of these events that have transpired. Thank you so much.

DW: Well this has been a great thrill, a great privilege for me to be able to talk about the organ. Thank you. And one parting thought, with something that is so significant as culturally for Ricks College and Rexburg I think it's just a coincidence but a very pleasant happy one that this should happen during Rexburg's centennial anniversary as well.

HF: It's true that we had a number of things, events scheduled for the centennial. This wasn't one of them but it proved to be one of the highlights of our centennial year. It surely did. I thank you so much.

DW: Thanks.