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The Founding Vision of *BYU Studies*, 1959–1967

Clinton F. Larson

Time is of little consequence when an Event is near. In a rush and emphasis of time, three of us stood in a field to the north of Temple Hill.¹ Darrel Taylor said, “I want to establish a language training center for missionaries of the Church. I want it to be part of the department of foreign languages so that the beauties of the languages can be seen with the Truth that is in them.” And I thought of the possibility of a magazine for the university, as it might be, drawing its breath from the influence of ages past, from literature and the books wherein it lies.

We stood together in the field talking, and a cow stood near, nodding and lowing, it seemed, in assent. We had a compact for a beginning. Not too long, but after the Escalante accident in which Darrel and many others died,² the Language Training Mission became a reality. The magazine became a reality, too. I remember John Bernhard’s concern for its success. I was able to allay it. In my enthusiasm for what I called it—*The Wasatch Review*—I remembered how my interest in literature began from *My Book House*, a set of illustrated books in which the myths of old became real in my imagination, especially those of the Arthurian Legend. Then reading, in my college days and later, became part of my career as a teacher and a writer. President Wilkinson agreed with my vision of a learned journal at the university, although, I suppose, with reservations.

I made my presentation for *The Wasatch Review* in a luncheon of administration and faculty, to which the poet Carl Sandburg had been invited because he was in town for a forum assembly. I spoke; President Wilkinson arose and in a loud voice said, “We’re not going to call it *The Wasatch Review*. That would be an insult to the mountains.” Later, he named the magazine *Brigham Young University Studies*. Wilkinson, as a student at the university in the World War I period, had assembled some papers of fellow students with his own and had dropped them in a manila folder and called them that. So the magazine had its inception; I was the first editor and sole staff member.

Because time varies according to intensity and motive, I sought, and seek, the correlatives that will make both real. One cannot particularize items satisfactorily over a space of time unless he or she is willing to risk disproof as they disappear into the past. But I attempted to make *Brigham*

Young University Studies a threshold to opportunity for writers in the Church to create a meaningful literature for the Church. Besides being a threshold for creative writers, it was to be a threshold for scholarly or scientific writers. The emphasis of the magazine was originally upon “writers” in order to attain a proper purview, to achieve literary significance. *BYU Studies* heralds spiritual and intellectual opportunity according to personal revelation. Nephi does not prescribe limitations for writers who are honest in heart. He said:

Now, I Nephi, cannot write in an effective, powerful way. When a man speaks, the Holy Ghost can reach the hearts of his listeners. But because men harden their hearts, they do not put great value upon writing. But I have written what I have written, and I know my writing is of great value to my people. So, I pray continually for my people by day, and I weep for them by night. I cry to my God in faith, and I know he will hear me. (2 Ne. 33:1–3; paraphrased by the author)

This is also the persuasion of the writers who have contributed to *BYU Studies*.

1. The three were H. Darrel Taylor, Ernest J. Wilkins, and myself. H. Darrel was at that time chairman of the Language Department at Brigham Young University. He served the BYU campus from 1948 until his untimely death in 1963. Ernest J. Wilkins later became president of the Language Training Mission. He taught in the Language Department at BYU from 1953 to 74.

2. On June 10, 1963, a group of Boy Scouts and their leaders were on their way to Hole-in-the-Rock, the southern Utah historic site where Mormon pioneers blazed a shortcut across the wilderness. They intended to begin a river trip on the Colorado. The two-ton cattle truck in which the group was traveling stalled on a steep hill and rolled backward off a thirty-foot embankment. Six adults and seven youths were killed; among them was H. Darrel Taylor.