## BYU's Unsung Heroes

## CECIL O. SAMUELSON

Once again it is our pleasure to welcome you to Brigham Young University at the beginning of winter semester. We have just finished a wonderful holiday season with the commemoration of the birth of the Savior of the World as our central focus and now enter a new year rich with anticipation and possibilities. We are grateful for those who have come back, just as we are for those of you with us for the first time. We are part of a truly remarkable community, and I am grateful for the blessing of being here. I hope and anticipate that the same is true for each of you.

Recently some friends shared an interesting account that transpired years ago at the Air Force Academy. William "Bill" Crawford, known to the cadets in the squadron he served as Mr. Crawford the janitor, was barely recognized or acknowledged, and he did nothing to draw attention to himself or to promote himself with the students. He did his job exceedingly well, and apparently no one paid much attention to him or to his service to the academy and to future Air Force officers.

Mr. Crawford's personal appearance was not particularly impressive, and he demonstrated with his gray hair, his wrinkled face, and his slightly shuffling gait nothing of greatness that was readily apparent to the students. He was polite but apparently shy. He typically did not speak to the young cadets unless they spoke first, which they rarely did. He just seemed, as reported by one of the cadets, to "[blend] into the woodwork."

All of that changed in the fall of 1976 when one of the students was reading a book about World War II and the infantry campaign in Italy. Let me turn to the words of then student and later Air Force Colonel James Moschgat:

On Sept. 13, 1943, a Private William Crawford from Colorado, assigned to the 36th Infantry Division, had been involved in some bloody fighting on Hill 424 near Altavilla, Italy. . . .

... "In the face of intense and overwhelming hostile fire . . . with no regard for personal safety . . . on his own initiative, Private Crawford single-handedly attacked fortified enemy positions." It continued, "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, the President of the United States . . ."

Cadet Moschgat said to his roommate, "You're not going to believe this, but I think our janitor is a Medal of Honor winner."

Cecil O. Samuelson was BYU president when this devotional address was delivered on 8 January 2008.

The following Monday morning, the cadets couldn't wait to ask Bill, the janitor, about the story. As they met him, they showed him the page in question. He looked at it quietly for a time and then said, "Yep, that's me."

They then asked him why he had not ever told them about his experiences and his medal. He just humbly responded, "That was one day in my life and it happened a long time ago."

The students had to leave for class, but, for them and for Mr. Crawford, things were never the same again. Quickly the word spread throughout the academy that they had a hero among them and that their janitor had won the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Let me return to Colonel Moschgat's account:

Cadets who had once passed by Bill with hardly a glance, now greeted him with a smile and a respectful, "Good morning, Mr. Crawford." Those who had before left a mess for the "janitor" to clean up started taking it upon themselves to put things in order. Most cadets routinely stopped to talk to Bill throughout the day, and we even began inviting him to our formal squadron functions. He'd show up dressed in a conservative dark suit and quietly talk to those who approached him, the only sign of his heroics being a simple blue, star-spangled lapel pin. Almost overnight, Bill went from being a simple fixture in our squadron to one of our teammates. [From Colonel James Moschgat, 12th Operations Group Commander, "Lessons in Leadership"; see document *Ask the Chief*, Oct-Nov-Dec 2001, www.uscg.mil/leadership/ field/attach12a.doc; also *Checkpoints*, winter 2002 (an Air Force Academy publication)]

Well, there is more to the story about Bill Crawford's remarkable life, but my purpose in sharing it with you today is to have you consider the same question I asked myself as I read this account for the first time. My question is: Who are the unsung heroes here at BYU who deserve our recognition and acclaim?

I don't know that we have many Congressional Medal of Honor recipients among us or serving largely behind the scenes at BYU. I do know that in this extraordinary community of students, staff, faculty, and administrators there are many who deserve our respect, admiration, and appreciation.

Our dictionaries provide a number of definitions for the word *hero*. The one I would like you to think about today is one that defines *hero* as a woman or a man with achievements and qualities that we greatly admire. We can all think of heroes of prominence whom we honor significantly. They typically deserve our praise and our gratitude.

But the lesson of the account of Bill Crawford at the Air Force Academy reminds me—and I hope you—that we are likely surrounded by heroes who receive few if any public accolades and little if any recognition for what they have done and do. At the risk of embarrassing some friends, I'll mention four examples of people here at BYU whom I consider to be heroes. You will have your own list—and, in fact, my own is much longer as well.

Before I mention the four in our midst, let me reflect on some notions about heroes. Early in my calling as a General Authority, I was asked to prepare chapters for two books. The first was entitled *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), and I had the privilege of studying the life of the brother of Jared and then preparing a manuscript. While he occupies a prominent place in the book of Ether, it is striking that we do not know his name from the Book of Mormon account itself. The Prophet Joseph Smith revealed his name at a later date as Mahonri Moriancumer (see note in George Reynolds, "The Jaredites," *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 May 1892, 282).

What I learned about the brother of Jared that qualifies him as a hero includes his remarkable faith in the Lord and the Lord's willingness to answer his prayers. He had confidence in his brother and in himself, but

he relied primarily on the Lord. He was able to accept criticism and correction from the Lord, and this led to the saving of his people. The brother of Jared's life is worthy of our study and emulation, and he is a true hero.

The second chapter was for a book entitled Heroes of the Restoration (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997). In this assignment I studied in detail the life of David W. Patten, an original member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He was ordained in February 1835 with the initial Quorum of the Twelve. He died a short three and one-half years later at age 38 in the Battle of Crooked River in Missouri. Among the very first martyrs of this dispensation, little is known of David Patten by most Latter-day Saints today. We know he is mentioned in two places in the Doctrine and Covenants: the first when called on a mission in section 114, and the second after his death with the following assurance of his destiny found in section 124. Said the Lord: "David Patten I have taken unto myself; behold, his priesthood no man taketh from him; but, verily I say unto you, another may be appointed unto the same calling" (D&C 124:130).

Unlike Bill Crawford, Elder Patten did not survive his battle, nor did he live to have his name held in respectful remembrance except by the relative few who know our history and the tremendous sacrifices made by those called out of obscurity and who remain mainly obscure. I judge Elder Patten to be a hero not just because he gave his life for the Restoration but because he also lived for the Restoration. He was loved and trusted by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he blessed the lives of those with whom he served.

You will have a hard time finding the word *hero* in the scriptures, and yet there are many besides the two I have mentioned who deserve this description. Let me mention just two more before I reflect on those of our own circle.

I have often been intrigued by Ananias, the man who baptized Paul after his encounter

with the Lord on the road to Damascus. While there are others by the same name in the scriptures, all we know about this particular man is found in the two accounts of Paul's conversion in the book of Acts (see Acts 9:10–18, 22:12). We know Ananias was a disciple of the Savior, who had appeared to him in vision and had instructed him to go find Saul, restore his vision through the laying on of hands, and baptize him.

Ananias knew about Saul and did not like what he knew. He considered Saul to be dangerous and an enemy of the Lord. Nevertheless, he did as he was instructed and made the difference in the life of the man who was to become one of the most able of Jesus Christ's apostles. We know nothing of Ananias' life before or after these events, but his faithfulness and contribution, which have benefitted so many, qualify him as a hero.

Think of the little maid or servant of the wife of Naaman the Syrian, who was afflicted with leprosy and couldn't find a cure. This young woman—whose name we do not know and who was captured in Israel and taken to Syria—said to her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:3). We know the rest of the story and how Elisha instructed Naaman to bathe in the Jordan River seven times and how irritated this made Naaman. Other heroes include his servants, who persuaded Naaman to obey the prophet. When he did as he had been directed, he was cured.

Think of these obscure servants—those whose names we also don't have and whose lives are otherwise unknown to us. What if the young woman had not mentioned the prophet Elisha to Naaman's wife, and what if the servants had not persuaded Naaman to follow the prophet's counsel? These are also heroes because they made a real difference—as have Bill Crawford, the brother of Jared, David W. Patten, and others you might think of as well.

Now, if you will, return with me to my earlier question that followed the account of Bill Crawford at the Air Force Academy. Who are the unrecognized heroes here at BYU who deserve our recognition and acclaim? I hope you will think of those you know and, perhaps even more important, those you haven't recognized but encounter regularly on this remarkable campus. As examples, I will mention just four for whom, it seems to me, the title of "hero" can justifiably apply. I will not mention students or faculty, although I can think of several in each category, but will focus on special people who have essentially made their service and assistance to others the central component of their assignments at Brigham Young University. I encourage you to think about and identify your own list because you will likely be surprised—as was I—at how many we really have among us.

Janet Calder began her service at BYU about the same time Dallin H. Oaks began his as BYU president. Over the years she supported Presidents Oaks, Holland, Lee, and Bateman and now finally assists me. She is a consummate lady who greets every visitor or caller to the president's office with cheerful, helpful, patient courtesy even when she is not able to respond affirmatively to the requests or demands that are made of her. She has the unenviable task of keeping my calendar straight and helping me meet the multiple requirements and necessary commitments of my office. Regularly I'm told how helpful, considerate, and thoughtful Janet is. I echo those sentiments from my personal experience of these past few years.

Duane Busby has been an invaluable asset in the Athletic Department for many years. He handles the major logistical load in seeing that our football team, coaches, and others have the equipment they need. He sees that appropriate arrangements have been made for the care and keeping of the equipment when traveling and does virtually anything requested

of him to make things flow smoothly. While seemingly shy and retiring by nature, he nevertheless is dogged in his determination to make sure those for whom he has responsibility are afforded all that they need in order to fulfill their responsibilities and assignments. All of this he does with pleasantness, competence, and absolute reliability. You don't read about Duane on the sports pages, but you do hear about him from his friends and student athletes.

Lynne Hansen of Dining Services began her sojourn at BYU more than 25 years ago. Together with remarkably able and competent associates in BYU Dining Services, she has overseen major events of many sorts, has attended to the needs of high-profile guests of BYU, and has personally looked after and assisted in the many hosting chores of four BYU presidents and their wives. She is always pleasant, immediately responsive to any request—even the totally unexpected—and is truly an artist in the creation of menus, table and plate presentations, and all of the other details of an important event. Well recognized for her professionalism in the industry, she also has had a tremendously positive influence in helping student employees develop the traits and skills that allow them to have similar successes themselves. She doesn't seek the limelight but makes it shine brightly for others.

Mark Philbrick has been the chief BYU photographer for many years and always represents the university, its officers, students, faculty, staff, and visitors in the best possible light and in the most favorable poses. He treats all with great respect and is recognized far beyond the university for both the quality and the reliability of his artistic work. He is called upon by the university, the Mountain West Conference, the NCAA, and others to make sure an accurate and adequate photographic history is kept of significant and important events. He is equally comfortable capturing with his cameras the images of prophets, performers,

and players—all the while recognizing that his service to Brigham Young University is his focus, rather than any recognition that might rightfully accrue to him. You might not recognize Mark's face, but you all will recognize his work.

I wish time would allow for me to go on and on and recognize so many more who are so deserving. The four I have just mentioned are authentic examples of literally hundreds more who also deserve our accolades and commendation. While each of the four has a unique job description and their contributions are evaluated in different ways, they also have characteristics that entitle them, in my estimation, to be considered heroes of Brigham Young University. Let me enumerate some of these traits.

First, they are nice people. They are considerate of each person they meet and clearly focus their attention on the needs of others rather than on themselves. They are always courteous.

Second, they are people of high professional competence. They know their jobs and do them extraordinarily well. They do not show off, but they do what they do with excellence.

Third, they are self-starters. By that I mean they immediately and reflexively identify what needs to be done and then do it without the need to be ordered or asked. In that regard, they typically are found doing necessary things that some might feel others ought to be worried about.

Fourth, they love BYU. They understand that this unique place has special responsibilities and opportunities, and they are totally committed to making the university and the people around them successful.

Fifth, they are authentic people in the way they live and serve. Their devotion to the kingdom, the university, and the Savior is deep, profound, and absolutely consistent.

Sixth, they are wise and generous enough to have made their careers at BYU even when they have had other alternatives and certainly could have been better compensated financially elsewhere.

Seventh, each knows the compensation that matters most does not come in the form of money but does come from the deep satisfaction of making the lives of others better or more comfortable.

For each of these four and the others you and I are thinking of as well, additional attributes and positive characteristics could be mentioned. They fully incorporate the counsel of Jesus Christ, who said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (Matthew 20:26). Likewise, they are examples of the truth expressed by King Benjamin when he taught, "And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

I am grateful for the privilege we have at BYU to be surrounded by wonderful and authentic heroes. I am so appreciative to be able to share and declare along with them the testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that we are all blessed to have the opportunities to act in ways that might also qualify us to be heroes for someone else. May it be so. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.