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HUGH B. BROWN'S PROGRAM FOR LATTER-DAY SAINT SERVICEMEN DURING WWII

David L. Clark

Abstract: *Prior to U.S. involvement in WWII, the First Presidency asked Hugh B. Brown to initiate and serve as coordinator of a program that would reinforce the spiritual welfare of the increasing number of Latter-day Saint men entering the military. Brown initially answered the challenge by organizing religious services at training camps along the West Coast because of the large number of Church-member men training there. However, following Pearl Harbor, he expanded the program to 65 training camps in many parts of the country. He also created USO-type facilities in Salt Lake City and San Diego, distributed pocket-size scriptures, wrote faith-strengthening articles, and answered requests for spiritual support from Latter-day Saint servicemen. In 1943, Brown's program enlarged with the addition of assistant coordinators and became part of the newly formed Servicemen's Committee chaired by Elder Harold B. Lee. In 1944, Brown was recalled as the British Mission president and left 13 assistants to manage his program through the conclusion of the war. Interviews with veterans who experienced Brown's program suggest that the pocket-size copies of the Book of Mormon carried everywhere, even in battle, may have been Brown's most significant contribution to their war-time spiritual maintenance.*

It is the army's job to armor-plate with steel. I have found the kind of armor-plating that is stronger than any metal...What finer gift could a man receive than the armor of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Such a man is prepared to live and be prepared to die.¹

1. Richard F. Taylor, "News from the Camps," *Improvement Era* 46, no.9 (September 1943): 551. Taylor was a lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

Anticipating WWII, Latter-day Saint men began joining the military. In 1940, the United States' first peacetime military draft was instituted, and additional Latter-day Saint men became servicemen. At that time the Church had no official contact with Latter-day Saint members in training camps.² To support member servicemen, in early 1941 the First Presidency appointed Hugh B. Brown to be coordinator of servicemen's Latter-day Saint activities in training camps, and in 1942 Elder Harold B. Lee was appointed chair of an expanded Church Servicemen's Committee that incorporated Brown's coordinator program.

The Church History Library has no database for the existence, organization, function, or accomplishments of the Church's activities with Church servicemen in training for WWII. This article describes and examines Brown's program to coordinate Latter-day Saint activities at training camps during the war years. Sources for this study include interviews with WWII veterans who experienced some part of Brown's program, the war-time *Improvement Era* and *Church News*, archived reports on WWII military meetings, miscellaneous Hugh B. Brown folders in the Church History Library, and information from several biographies.

Organizing to Support Latter-day Saint Servicemen in Training

With large numbers of Latter-day Saints joining the U.S. military, Church leaders looked for ways to furnish spiritual support for the men while they were in training. Hugh B. Brown was the obvious choice to organize a program because of his military training-camp experience with the Canadian Army during World War I. From 1914 to 1916, Major Brown directed training in Canada and then took troops to England and France. He later returned to Canada, directed more training, and returned to Europe.³ Brown was released as the British Mission president because of wartime conditions in London, and on May 1, 1941, the First Presidency named him to organize a program for U.S. servicemen.⁴ Brown later commented, "The First Presidency had asked me to become coordinator for all Latter-day Saint servicemen and to travel to most of the camps in the United States and Canada, trying to encourage the boys to be true

2. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 545.

3. Hugh B. Brown, *An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 56.

4. "Elder Brown is Named to New Post," *Deseret News*, April 28, 1941. Eugene E. Campbell and Richard D. Poll, *Hugh B. Brown: His Life and Thought* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975), 144.

to themselves and to the church during their military service.”⁵ When called, Brown did not have a full-time job, and Church leaders did not consider his assignment a full-time position, but they did offer him a living allowance and travel expenses to organize a program.⁶

Brown initiated the program when he traveled to San Luis Obispo, California, with his wife Zina on May 18, 1941, his first official military visit. His next objective was to talk to officers at the Chief of Army Chaplains Office in Washington, DC, about his and the Church's status in military camps.⁷ Brown's assignment enlarged after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He later recalled,

I was holding a conference for the servicemen in San Luis Obispo. When we learned of the attack, we knew, of course, that war would be immediately declared and that the status of these men in the service would change from preparatory training to active service. There was a very strong feeling of despair. Many of the men felt despondent, because we were not prepared to enter into a war with Japan and Germany. ... I felt inspired beyond myself as I talked to the men, relating to them incidents from my own life that had helped and inspired me.⁸

As war began, the U.S. government had a difficult time handling the influx of recruits that had accelerated with the military draft in 1940 and was enhanced by enlistments and call-up of National Guard and Army Reserves. “A gigantic mess ensued. ... [T]he Army was simply not prepared to assimilate such vast numbers of new manpower” and needed more training camps.⁹ More training camps meant that Brown's responsibilities grew beyond California and Washington to coordinating religious activities for Latter-day Saint servicemen training throughout the United States.

In August 1942, Brown met in Los Angeles with Elders Lee and Albert L. Bowen of the Council of the Twelve. Lee became an apostle in April, and one of his first assignments was to work with Brown and the military. The three visited defense facilities together and met with military officials and local Church leaders who could help with Brown's expanded duties. In San Diego, they met with the Chief of Chaplains at the San Diego Naval Training Station and held meetings at Camp Roberts at Oakland

5. Brown, *An Abundant Life*, 97.

6. Campbell and Poll, *Hugh B. Brown*, 149.

7. *Ibid.*, 145.

8. Brown, *An Abundant Life*, 97.

9. Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life: An Autobiography by General of the Army Omar. N. Bradley* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 91.

and Fort Ord in the Bay Area. They conferred with military officials at the Presidio in San Francisco before moving on to Oregon, where they paused for a little exercise, a round of golf, and then on to Ft. Lewis, Washington, and officials at the naval base at Bremerton, where the visits concluded.¹⁰

Brown remained in Washington “to work with local leaders in completing the organization to track and to help servicemen,”¹¹ while Lee and Bowen returned to Salt Lake City. According to Francis Gibbons, a biographer of Elder Lee, the two apostles agreed that Brown should be called as an assistant to the Twelve. While that did not happen at the time, it showed the importance placed on Brown’s work.¹² Lee’s report convinced the First Presidency of a need to expand services for the growing number of Church military personnel. As a result, they created the Church Servicemen’s Committee, which became the single organization to care for Latter-day Saint servicemen. Lee was named chairman, with Brown and John H. Taylor, of the Seventy as committee members.¹³ Brown continued the program he had initiated in 1941 but also assisted in new committee duties. According to Gibbons, this also “began a long association between these two old friends in the interest of Latter-day Saint servicemen.”¹⁴

Latter-day Saint Chaplain Problems

One of the first assignments for Brown and the new committee was to work with “United States military officials to secure the appointments of Latter-day Saint chaplains.”¹⁵ Applications for chaplain appointments for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were repeatedly rejected because Latter-day Saint candidates did not meet the requirements of possessing a college degree and having a previous ecclesiastical assignment

10. Francis M. Gibbons, *Harold B. Lee: Man of Vision, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 183–86.

11. *Ibid.*, 186.

12. *Ibid.*, 187. Brown was finally sustained as an Assistant to the Twelve on October 4, 1953.

13. *Ibid.*; Campbell and Poll, *Hugh B. Brown*, 158, L. Brent Goates, *Harold B. Lee: Prophet & Seer* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985). 182.

14. Gibbons, *Harold B. Lee*, 187.

15. Church Educational System, “Chapter Forty: The Saints during World War II,” in *Church History in the Fulness of Times Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 530, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/church-history-in-the-fulness-of-times/chapter-forty?lang=eng>.

such as a full-time Seminary teacher or a ministry appointment.¹⁶ The Church argued that it had no paid ministry, but many of its candidates had served up to two years as full-time missionaries, and some had previous experience as Seminary teachers. Working together, the committee members presented the Church's arguments in late Fall, 1942. The Church's policy was accepted, and by February 1943, additional Latter-day Saint chaplains were appointed. By the end of the war, there were 45 Church chaplains — 37 in the Army and Air Force and 8 in the Navy — among 12,000 U.S. chaplains who served during WWII.¹⁷

Brown's Program

Organizing religious services at military bases was the first order of business for Brown. Initial visits to bases included talking to either the base's senior chaplain or the commanding officer to request permission to hold meetings and arrange a meeting place. Announcements of meeting times were posted, and at the initial meeting, a group leader was called from among the servicemen. The group leader assumed responsibility for arranging meetings, and this responsibility continued when he was transferred to a new base.¹⁸

By May 1943, Brown had organized member services and set apart group leaders at 23 training camps in Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming.¹⁹ A few months later, group

16. The path to becoming a chaplain included 1. Ecclesiastical approval, 2. Processing of credentials by General Commission for Army and Navy Chaplains, 3. Selection by office of Chief of Chaplains, 4. Six weeks in Chaplain School at Harvard, and 5. Assignment to military unit. Details are from two unpublished manuscripts: Richard Maher, "For God and Country: Mormon Chaplains During WWII" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975), 36–39; and "Eugene Campbell Oral History Interview", interview by Richard Maher, LDS Military Chaplains Oral History Project, July 17, 1973. An additional problem for Latter-day Saint candidates was the chaplain quota system. The quota of chaplains for each church was based on the membership of that church in 1916, a WWI rule not changed until a 1939 census was used in 1945. Maher, "For God and Country: Mormon Chaplains During WWII," 39.

17. Maher, "For God and Country: Mormon Chaplains During WWII," 38. Twenty-three of the forty-five chaplains were appointed after January, 1944. *Ibid.*, 116–17.

18. Campbell and Poll, *Hugh B. Brown*, 146, and first-hand knowledge of procedure.

19. "The Church Moves On: LDS Organizations in Army Camps," *Improvement Era* 46, no.5 (May 1943): 286–87. Locations included Alaska (Fort Dutch Harbor),

leaders were called and services organized at additional Mississippi, Texas, and Louisiana bases.²⁰ By late 1943, Brown had organized Church services at 42 military training bases in 13 states.

By December, 1943, 45,000 member servicemen were in training, and by 1945 the number increased to 100,000.²¹ With the expanded activity, Brown needed help, and the First Presidency called the first assistant servicemen's coordinators, five men who Brown assigned to supervise and organize Latter-day Saints in specific training camps throughout the country. Assistants were given an instruction manual that outlined how to gain recognition at camps, organize camp services, select group leaders, and oversee priesthood ordinances. In areas with no nearby Church organization, assistant coordinators could interview, baptize, confer the Aaronic Priesthood, and approve priesthood advancement, or under special circumstances, authorize group leaders to meet these needs.²²

In 1942, Brown and his family moved from California to Salt Lake City, and he supervised the assistant coordinators from an office in the Church Administration Building. The move helped ignite Brown's program:

- Brown now had a secretary who helped search stake and ward records for the location of member servicemen. Lists of servicemen and the bases where they were training were

Arizona (Luke Field, Williams Field, Camp Coolidge, Davis-Moathan Field, Maralta Army Air Field Flying School), California (Eleventh Naval District, San Diego; Ship Barracks, Treasure Island; Camp Roberts; 65th Coast Artillery, Inglewood), Florida (Camp Blanding), Idaho (Naval Training, Farragut), Louisiana (Camp Polk), Mississippi (Camp McCain), New Mexico (Deming, Sumner), Oregon (Camp White), Texas (Sheppard Field, Camp Barkeley, Camp Hood), Virginia (Camp Peary), Washington (Ft. Lewis), and Wyoming (Camp Francis E. Warren).

20. "The Church Moves On," *Improvement Era* 46, no. 9 (September 1943): 554. Locations included Mississippi (Camp Shelby, Camp Van Doren, Gulfport Field, Jackson Air Base, Keesler Field, Key Field, Laurel Air Base), Texas (Camp Bowie, Camp Howze, Camp Maxey, Camp Wallace, Camp Walters, Laredo Army Air Field, Lubbock Army Air Force Base, North Camp Hood, San Antonio Cadet Center, San Marcos Army Air Force Base, Texas A&M), and Louisiana (Camp Polk).

21. "The Church Moves On: Service Men," *Improvement Era* 47, no. 2 (February 1944): 94.

22. "The Church Moves On: Coordinator Aides," *Improvement Era* 46, no. 9 (September 1943): 542. A 1943 copy of the Instruction Manual for Assistants was not found in the Church History Library, but a 1948 copy titled "Instructions to Assistant Co-ordinators, LDS Chaplains, MIA Group Leaders, Mission and Stake Representatives" gives instructions in a 29-page manual under the signatures of an expanded Servicemen's Committee: Elders Harold B. Lee, Hugh B. Brown, John H. Taylor, and a then-recent appointee, Mark E. Petersen.

assembled and sent to the assistant responsible for the geographic area of the base. Group leaders were called and assumed responsibility for camp activities as well as off-base chapels when military facilities were not available.²³

- Brown organized a Latter-day Saint Servicemen's Center in the former mission home on North State Street for those training near or passing through Salt Lake City. Like USO facilities, the center had rooms for reading, for writing, and for recreation. In February 1943, Brown moved his office there.²⁴
- In 1943, he opened a similar reception center in the North Park chapel in San Diego²⁵ for servicemen such as Les Booth, U.S. Army, who called it a "home away from home."²⁶ This work with Servicemen's Centers was enhanced by Church members who welcomed Latter-day Saint servicemen in their homes, some converting their basements into dormitory-like facilities. There were cots for servicemen on leave, free meals, and members even sponsored birthday or other "aversary" parties for servicemen stationed in their area.²⁷
- Perhaps Brown's most significant contribution for Church servicemen was his leadership in printing two small-sized books, the Book of Mormon and Principles of the Gospel. Because of their small size, the books could be placed in a shirt pocket and carried anywhere. Some servicemen called the books their "battlefield copies." Brown wrote the preface for the Principles of the Gospel volume and provided instructions on wearing garments in the military, how to share the gospel, and other items, plus an alphabetical listing and discussion of gospel topics, such as agency, baptism, and chastity, and even a few hymns. Seventy-five thousand copies of the two volumes were distributed to Latter-day Saint servicemen, mostly by Brown's assistant coordinators.²⁸

23. Campbell and Poll, *Hugh B. Brown*, 145–46.

24. *Ibid.*, 161–62.

25. *Ibid.*, 162.

26. Booth was interviewed in April 2019.

27. Richard O. Cowan and William E. Homer, *California Saints: A 150-Year Legacy in the Golden State* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 311.

28. Campbell and Poll, *Hugh B. Brown*, 158.

- Late in the war, the Servicemen's Committee also published small-sized "Service Men's Edition of the Church News." This began in May 1944, and 90,000 copies of each edition were eventually printed.²⁹
- Brown published a series of articles in the *Improvement Era* advising servicemen to keep the faith and adhere to gospel principals under the worst of circumstances. For example, in one article he specified, "Righteousness, which is obedience to law, exalts an individual as well as a nation; while sin, which is the folly of disobedience, deliberately taking the wrong road, doing things the hard way, is a reproach to any man."³⁰ All articles stressed the importance for each man to be faithful to his beliefs in spite of despair and gloom that could engulf him, and not to give in to the temptation of ignoring moral standards that others might justify because of what could become a daily threat of death.
- Brown was able to arrange "budget cards" for Latter-day Saint servicemen who were stationed close to local wards, which permitted them to attend all special entertainment events of the local unit free of charge.³¹ In response to all of these activities, servicemen were encouraged to write letters describing their experiences during training as well as in combat. A special section of the *Improvement Era* was reserved for these letters.³²

Program Progress

Organizing religious services was the main responsibility of Brown's program. However, interviews with servicemen more than 70 years after the war indicated that memories of past services were vague. Robert Hedelius remembers attending services whenever he could, but he has special memories of only one meeting at the Naval Training Camp

29. Maher, "For God and Country: Mormon Chaplains During WWII," 95.

30. Hugh B. Brown, "Thoughts for the Service Man's Quiet Hour," *Improvement Era* 47, no. 6 (June 1944): 377. Additional articles in the series appeared in April 1944, p. 207 and May 1944, p. 278.

31. "The Church Moves On: LDS Service Men Receive Budget Tickets," *Improvement Era* 46, no. 4 (April 1943): 221.

32. The first of these monthly letters appear in "News from the Camps," *Improvement Era* 46, no. 7 (July 1943): 423. Letters continued to be published even after the end of the war.

in Farragut, Idaho, when Elder George Albert Smith was the speaker.³³ While memories of meetings are few, there are extensive records of WWII servicemen meetings because those in charge, probably the group leader, submitted reports. The Church History Library has thousands of these reports from meetings held during 1942–1945 and later. Reports and records of meetings at each of 65 camps are grouped together chronologically and are mostly single-page handwritten, but some are typed. Handwritten reports also occur in ledgers or in a large variety of notebooks. Any style to no style formats for reporting the meetings were used until sometime in 1944, when the Servicemen's Committee begin providing a standard reporting form. Most reports are a brief summary of meeting activity, with presiding and conducting personnel listed, songs sung, and speakers or teachers noted. Most also include an attendance record, and some include lists signed by all who were in attendance. Many of the thousands of reports indicate that the meetings were held irregularly, while others are of weekly or bi-weekly reports covering the entire war years.³⁴

A review of hundreds of these reports provides a description of Latter-day Saint camp meetings, some similar to what most Church members experience and would be comfortable attending today. Most of the reports in the Church Library are specific as to what kind of Latter-day Saint meeting was held, but others are simply called “meeting” and contain only a brief outline. Other reports, which could more accurately be called *files*, include communications, including descriptions of activities other than meetings for the service group. For example, one file documents actions by serviceman Arves Christensen who wrote a letter to Church offices in Salt Lake from Camp Beale, California, and reported that 12 men belonging to the Church in his barracks wanted to organize. Hugh B. Brown went to Camp Beale, organized the group, and supplied the men with all of the necessary books and instructions.³⁵

Meeting attendance ranged from a few to hundreds. For example, 550 attended a meeting at the Naval Training Station in Farragut, Idaho,

33. Interviewed in May 2019.

34. All reports are listed under the call number CR 596, in the Church History Library.

35. Meeting Minutes and Attendance Records, Servicemen's Group Camp, Beale, CA, 1944–1947, Church History Library, CR 596 48.

in September 1944, while only 6 were present at a meeting at Army Post Office 944, Alaska, in July 1942.³⁶

Group leaders conducted most meetings; the turnover in military personnel was frequent, so those called as group leaders commonly functioned for only a brief period before leaving for additional training or for overseas duty. This meant that the assistant coordinator was constantly calling new group leaders. One estimate is that at least 1,000 group leaders were called during the war years.³⁷ However, this estimate may be too low, because by the end of the war, one assistant coordinator (W. Aird MacDonald) had set apart 332 group leaders. Other assistants most likely had similar experiences.³⁸

Group leaders were given a certificate and commonly had two assistants.³⁹ In addition, group leaders had support from volunteers such as Barbara Bradeson of Venice, California, who served a mission and then served as the secretary of the Latter-day Saint servicemen's group meeting at Hammer Field in Fresno, California. Her fulltime job was as a sheet metal worker at Douglas Aircraft at Hammer Field.⁴⁰

Involvement of then-current as well as future General Authorities in camp activities included the organization of a group in a Menlo Park, California, hospital by Elder Harold B. Lee,⁴¹ and at a 1944 Marine training base in Hawaii, where serviceman A. Theodore Tuttle was group leader and Elder Alma Sonne presided. Tuttle was still group leader in July 1945, when Elder Lee was the speaker at services at the same camp.⁴²

36. Meeting Minutes and Attendance Records, Servicemen's Group, US Naval Training Station, Farragut, Idaho, 1944, Church History Library, CR 596 177; Meeting Minutes, Servicemen's Group, Army Post Office 944, AK, July 19, 1942, Church History Library, CR 596 349.

37. "Chapter Forty: The Saints during World War II," 530.

38. Servicemen's Committee Record of Servicemen Activities, 1943–1948, Church History Library, CR 33 16. This source contains a letter from Wallace Aird MacDonald to the First Presidency, December 12, 1945.

39. Maher, "For God and Country: Mormon Chaplains During WWII," 94. In combat areas where there were a number of member servicemen, group leaders were called by Church chaplains and their "congregations" were called MIA Groups.

40. Military Relations Committee, LDS Servicemen Photographs, circa 1942–1980s, Church History Library, CR 33 20.

41. Meeting Minutes and Attendance Records, Servicemen's Group, Dibble General Hospital: Menlo Park, CA, 1944–46, Church History Library, CR 596 78.

42. Meeting minutes and Attendance Records, Servicemen's Group, US Marine Corps, 1: Island Y, HI, 1943–1946, Church History Library, CR 596 127. Tuttle became a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy a few years following the war and is remembered as the Marine who was present and provided the flag raised in

A photograph of an Oak Knoll Hospital meeting in Oakland, California shows nine patients, and members included patient Rex Pinegar and group leader Fred Adams.⁴³

Change and New Assignments

Brown's assistant coordinators made significant progress in their enthusiastic response to their callings, and less than a year following their appointments, there was a major change for Brown and his coordinator program. In 1944, Allied victory in Europe looked certain. Brown was released from his duties with the Church Servicemen's Committee on March 4, and in May he was again called as the British Mission president and accepted a second assignment as principal servicemen's coordinator for Europe and was to continue to help with the U.S. program, as well.⁴⁴ He then returned to London.⁴⁵

After this change, a full complement of 13 assistant coordinators was in place to continue Brown's program for the remainder of 1944 and the final year of the war.⁴⁶ Without further direction from Brown, assistants had authority to organize groups, authorize baptisms, and ordain men to the priesthood. While working without a principal coordinator, they reported to Elder Lee, chairman of the Servicemen's Committee.

the famous event by Marines on Iwo Jima and memorialized in an often-shown statue.

43. Military Relations Committee, LDS Servicemen Photographs, circa 1942–1980s, Church History Library, CR 33 20. Photo in Box 2.

44. Campbell and Poll, *Hugh B. Brown*, 162.

45. Returning to England in 1944 was not easy. Brown obtained passage on a Greek freighter, the *Hellas*, an appropriate name for a ship that was part of a 62-vessel convoy taking supplies to England. He remembered that climbing the swaying Jacob's Ladder on the side of the ship in order to board was the easiest part of the cruise, because he had strong hands conditioned from milking cows when he was young. On board, Brown and the only other passenger, a cigar-smoking Dutch officer, shared a small closet-sized room with bunk beds. The voyage included encounters with heavy seas, which kept Brown sick most of the time. Between unappetizing food and the rocking ship, he made frequent use of what he politely called a bathroom. It was obviously a harrowing (and memorable) trip when he gratefully disembarked in Wales 17 days later. Campbell and Poll, *Hugh B. Brown*, 165–66. For other details of the return to England. Also see Brown, *An Abundant Life*, 101.

46. The 13 assistant coordinators who did most of the work are identified in the appendix.

Evaluation of Coordinator Activities

Did Brown's WWII coordinator program fulfill the objectives visualized by the First Presidency in 1941? A non-member chaplain who observed the behavior of Latter-day Saint servicemen during training commented:

The Mormon boys on at this post [Fort Ord, California] have what it takes! There's something about a Mormon soldier! He loves the United States. He is loyal to Almighty God. Apparently, no Mormon lad leaves his religion at home when he accompanies the colors to the battlefield. Undoubtedly, that is the chief reason why it is comparatively easy for them to carry on without shamming, without shirking, without sniveling. Anyway, neither worldliness on the one hand nor the roaring of guns on the other affect their faith in or loyalty to God and country. Naturally, therefore, as an American, I am proud of them.⁴⁷

Obviously, his comments reflected on the men's pre-service spiritual background as well as behavior in camp.

Another interesting commentary on member servicemen is a handwritten note dated May 7, 1944, by Major Hailes, whose Latter-day Saint affiliation or lack of it was not noted. He reported that among member servicemen scattered over the Aleutian Islands, "every LDS (serviceman) is his own Chaplain — other Churches need Chaplains, but every Mormon boy — can do more than all the Chaplains to influence the men in the army."⁴⁸

Activities of brother servicemen resulted in some convert baptisms. Assistant Coordinator Nielsen reported a convert baptism as a result of one of his group's efforts and eventually the coordinators were given authority for baptisms for converts made in training camps.⁴⁹

In interviews with Latter-day Saint veterans concerning their involvement with Brown's WWII program 75 to 80 years ago, most had limited memory of religious services and activities at the various training

47. "The Church Moves On: Chaplain Pays Tribute," *Improvement Era* 47, no. 12 (December 1944): 767.

48. Military Relations Committee, LDS Servicemen Photographs, circa 1942–1980s, Church History Library, CR 33 20.

49. C. L. Nielsen, "Coordinator Gives Report," Military Relations Committee, LDS Servicemen Photographs, circa 1942–1980s, Church History Library, CR 33 20. Assistants had authority to supervise all steps to baptisms by 1948, and most likely during the war years, as well. Instructions to Assistant Coordinators, ref. 22, p. 21.

camps. Most remembered only that they attended services and activities when they could, but that regular attendance was difficult because of various training assignments. However, with only a couple of exceptions, all of those interviewed reported that the pocket-size scriptures were the most valuable resource they would credit to Brown's program. Infantryman Zane Taylor, who lost frozen toes during the Battle of the Bulge, fashioned a small steel plate the same size of his battlefield scriptures, which he placed in front of the scriptures in his shirt pocket. Air-Force veteran Robert Monson, shot down over Germany and a POW until liberated by General George Patton, fondly remembered reading his small books.⁵⁰ Most of those interviewed said that they still possessed their copies, including paratrooper Clyde Swenson who remembered Church services at training camps as well as reading constantly from his Book of Mormon.⁵¹

Freeman and Wright reported this same positive evaluation of the battlefield copies of the scriptures and wrote that "the servicemen's edition of the Book of Mormon in particular provided a great source of strength for servicemen" and that "testimonies of more than a few servicemen were greatly bolstered."⁵² This included Air Force pilot Lieutenant Boyd K. Packer, who "received his pocket-size servicemen's copy of the Book of Mormon [and] began a consistent search at every standing, waiting moment. His bold, colored markings show his study. He wore out its bent, water-soaked cover, then fitted and sewed another from the back of someone's discarded leather flight jacket."⁵³ Packer recounted that "the Book of Mormon became a part of my very soul."⁵⁴ John Weenig summarized the feelings of many when he wrote that the small-sized volumes "have been the richest gifts that could be given to the men in the service,"⁵⁵ further supporting the idea that these books were the most significant accomplishment of Brown's program.

The *Improvement Era* letters ("News from the Camps") are another permanent and accessible record of Latter-day Saint servicemen's

50. Interviewed in April 2019.

51. Interviewed in May 2019.

52. Robert C. Freeman and Des A. Wright, *Saints at War: Experiences of Latter-day Saints in World War II* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2001), 16–17, and references throughout, e. g. 153–54, 184, 187, 189, 252–54, 296–97, 336–37, 410–11.

53. Lucile C. Tate, *Boyd K. Packer: A Watchman on the Tower* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 49.

54. *Ibid.*, 59. Packer's battlefield copy of the Book of Mormon is on display in the BYU Bean Museum.

55. "News from the Camps," *Improvement Era* 46, no. 10 (October 1943): 615.

training-camp experiences.⁵⁶ Many letters suggest that the work performed by the coordinator program helped them maintain high standards, both during training and later. In one letter, Kenneth Morrison, stationed at Paine Field, Washington, explained that he “attended meetings as often as conditions will permit” and when possible did missionary work and held cottage meetings in towns near their base.⁵⁷ Lieutenant Douglas Christensen reminded *Improvement Era* readers from his camp in Camp Hann, California, that living in the dust of war, we “lose sight of who we are” and “without spirituality [enhanced in training camps] we lose hope.”⁵⁸ Gordon Stettler compared and praised his training camp experiences against the non-member lifestyle of colleagues.⁵⁹

Summary

Twenty-five years after the war, Brown recalled, “[M]y mission at the time was to try to bring hope, encouragement, and faith to the men, most of whom were very young. This, I am glad to say, was accomplished to some extent.”⁶⁰ Brown and his assistant coordinators successfully set apart at least a thousand servicemen group leaders, and together they organized thousands of spiritual meetings and other activities for Church servicemen at 65 U.S. training camps. Brown established USO style facilities for fellow servicemen in California and Utah and secured free ward and stake budget cards for servicemen. He wrote articles intended to inspire and comfort the servicemen, some of whom wrote letters to the *Improvement Era* describing their spiritual growth. With others of the Servicemen’s Committee, he produced and distributed “battlefield” editions of the Book of Mormon and *Principles of the Gospel*, which the servicemen could easily take wherever they went. The servicemen’s edition of the Book of Mormon, in particular, provided a great source of strength for servicemen far from home. Servicemen reported turning to their “battlefield” scriptures whenever a free moment allowed them to

56. All volumes are available online: “Improvement Era Archives,” https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Online_document_index/Improvement_Era.

57. Kenneth B. Morrison, “News from the Camps,” *Improvement Era* 46, no. 9 (September 1943): 551.

58. Douglas Christensen, “News from the Camps,” *Improvement Era* 47, no. 1 (January 1945): 39.

59. Gordon Stettler, “News from the Camps,” *Improvement Era* 47, no. 2 (February 1944): 103.

60. Brown, *An Abundant Life*, 97.

do so, and testimonies of servicemen must have been bolstered through experiences instituted by Brown.⁶¹

As WWII ended, Brown, writing from London, composed his final letter to the servicemen he had followed and inspired during the war years:

And now, brother, let us join hands across the years, and finish what we haltingly began. Between the time we came home [referring to his personal action in WWI] and you went out, many things were done, and left undone, which we wish we could forget. But for the sake of our comrades, yours and mine, and for the sake of those to whom you must pass the torch, the young men of 1964–2000 — let us undertake to make a peacetime world which will say in more than words: “Yes! we do remember, and with God’s help we’ll not forget.”⁶²

David L. Clark completed studies at BYU, Columbia, and the University of Iowa. He taught at SMU and BYU but spent most of his professional career at the University of Wisconsin — Madison, where he served as chairman of the Department of Geology and Geophysics and associate dean responsible for the Natural Sciences at Wisconsin. His research focused on the geology of the Arctic Ocean, and from 1995–1999, he served as chairman of the Polar Research Board of the National Academy of Science. He received the R.C. Moore Award for Excellence in Paleontology and the Pander Society Medal for micropaleontology research. He published two books related to theology and history of the restored Church of Jesus Christ and also has published in the *Journal of Mormon History* and *BYU Studies*.

61. Brown’s success with the WWII program for Latter-day Saint servicemen, his exemplary Church service in other areas, including two appointments as British mission president, and his extraordinary qualities as a caring and dedicated leader, was recognized 12 years following the war when in April 1958 he was called to the Quorum of the Twelve. From 1961 to 1970, he served in the First Presidency as counselor to President David O. McKay.

62. Hugh B. Brown, “To a Service Man of World War II,” *Improvement Era* 47, no. 12 (December 1944): 755, 795.

Appendix

The final 13 assistant coordinators who continued Brown's program to the war's conclusion lived in different parts of the country and had different backgrounds.

James R. Boone was a Jacksonville, Florida, businessman who had an automobile dealership but was president of the Florida District Presidency. His Church service included serving a mission in the southern states, which became his area of coordinator responsibility. Later he served as stake patriarch. He spent at least three days each week with his assistant's duties.

Leigh W. Clark was raised in Arizona, attended Brigham Young University, and, shortly following WWI, served a mission in England. Most of his employment was with the Standard Oil Company of Texas as assistant secretary and treasurer of the company. Church service included callings as branch president, bishop, district president, and first patriarch of the Houston Stake. He was assigned to visit military bases in south-central and north Texas.

Harry Clarke was born and converted to the Church in England, where he also served as a missionary. He was a member of radio station KSL's staff, was a singer, and had his own program "Homespun Hour" with Peter Spraynozzle. His assignment was for military camps in the Salt Lake City area, as well as in Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and western Iowa.

J. Oral Ellsworth studied at Utah State and Columbia and received his PhD at Cornell in 1926. In addition to earlier work as Agriculture Agent in Idaho, he taught at Oklahoma State University and at the time of his calling was Dean of the College of Business Administration at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. After the war, he served as Central States Mission president. His initial coordinator assignment was to work with 16 Army bases in west Texas and eastern New Mexico.

Riley A. Gwynn grew up in Charleston, Utah, and served as a missionary in the Central States Mission from 1924 to 1926. Gwynn was an attorney in Washington, DC, during WWII. He was a bishop at the time of his call to be an assistant coordinator. Frequently his teenage daughter, Elaine, accompanied him on visits to the different military training camps in the New England states, Virginia, and the Washington, DC, area.

Willard L. Kimball was raised in Logan, Utah, and was a grandson of Heber C. Kimball. He spent his early days in Salt Lake City, where he worked for Intermountain Electrical Supply and owned and operated a bookstore plus worked as an insurance agent. He later moved to San Diego and at the time of his calling was a building contractor and also

counselor in the San Diego stake presidency. His service assignment was for approximately 70 camps in southern California and Arizona.

John Longden was born in Oldham, Lancashire, England, and moved with his parents to Utah, where he attended school and graduated from the University of Utah. He was in various business ventures, including management with Westinghouse Electric. He served as bishop of a Salt Lake ward and, following his call as an assistant coordinator in 1943, was called as Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve in 1951. His assignment was the Utah area.

W. Wallace McBride graduated from Utah State and served as water master in Declo, Idaho, and then acquired a Law Degree from George Washington University. He served in the WWI Air Force and later held a variety of positions in Salt Lake City, including prohibition administrator for Utah, and worked with the Veterans Administration. He also served as stake president of a South Carolina stake and bishop of the 18th Ward in Salt Lake City. He was a good friend of Hugh Brown and Harold B. Lee. He was assigned North and South Carolina.

W. Aird MacDonald began his career as a newspaperman and cartoonist. Born in Arizona, most of his life was spent in northern California, where he worked for the Newspaper Enterprise Association, Equitable Life, and State Board of Equalization. He was the first president of the Berkeley and Oakland branches, later president of the Oakland Stake, and was president of the California Mission. At the time of his call, he was Liquor Control commissioner for central California. His assistant coordinator assignment was for 50 camps between Tulare, California, and Medford, Oregon.

Leo J. Muir was raised on a family farm in Woods Cross, Utah, graduated from the University of Utah, and became a Bountiful elementary school teacher. He was principal of the high school in Bountiful and served two terms as mayor of the city beginning in 1920. He was honored in Bountiful when Muir Elementary School was built. He was chairman of the County Democratic Party for 14 years and delivered the benediction at the 1960 Democrat National Convention following John F. Kennedy's acceptance speech. He later moved to California and also was president of the Northern States Mission. His assistant duties included the Los Angeles area.

Castle H. Murphy began his Hawaiian contact in 1909 as a missionary. Trained as a mason, he worked in the Ogden area in a variety of jobs but also served a term as deputy county clerk and Ogden City treasurer. He was called as Hawaii Mission and temple president in 1930 and served

as temple president a second time in 1936. He was called to be Hawaiian Mission president again in 1944, at the same time as his call as assistant coordinator. He later served as Ben Lomand Stake Patriarch. His WWII assignment was the Hawaiian Islands and Pacific area.

Clifford L. Neilson was raised in Mt. Pleasant, Utah, and later moved to Portland, Oregon, where he worked for a mortuary. He later moved to southern California, where he worked in the Los Angeles area for the Beneficial Life Insurance Company. He held a variety of Church callings, and his assignment as an assistant was 20 bases in the Los Angeles — Long Beach area. He was successful in keeping servicemen in touch with the Church and bringing many of them into activity. His assignment also was the Pacific Northwest.

C. Clarence Neslen was the Utah National Guard chaplain appointed to provide counsel with Brown when the servicemen's coordinator position was announced in 1941. In 1944, he received a formal assignment as an assistant coordinator. He served as mayor of Salt Lake City from 1920 to 1928, and also served as a Utah State senator and as bishop of the Salt Lake 20th Ward for 26 years. Later during the war, he was the base chaplain at Fort Lewis, Washington. His coordinator assignment was the Los Angeles area.