

Mayor Harold D. Westring-Lehi's 34th Mayor 1958-1965

By Richard Van Wagoner

Mayor Harold D. Westring accomplished what no other mayor in the acerbic quagmire of Lehi politics has been able to do--win re-election to a second four-year term. When former Mayor Frank Sharp withdrew from consideration because of a conflict of interest, two-term city councilman Westring became the Democrat nominee along with council hopefuls Howard W. Robinson and Ralph Hoover. The Democrat's platform consisted of planks to "improve recreational programs for the young people," promised the "support and cooperation of Lehi City in the development of the new High School site, " and to "re-establish unity and harmony among all citizens."

The candidates also agreed to continue supporting the Lehi City Hospital, the Hutchings Museum, and to make a thorough study of the City Manager form of government and its applicability to Lehi." To resolve the controversy over the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Pioneer Cemetery monument, which Mayor Sharp had threatened to toss into Dry Creek, Westring and his running mates agreed to cooperate with DUP "in finding a suitable site for the historical monument in connection with a roadside park."

The Republicans that fall primary election of 1957 nominated Warren Goates to the mayorship along with councilmen hopefuls Keith L. Larsen and Paul S. Willes. Their stated goals included improved health and safety, development of a new hospital, improving the city recreation program by lighting Vet's Ball Park, and expanding Little League baseball and girls softball, developing new roads, expanding garbage pickup and extending sewer lines, city beautification and encourage development on new local industries.

Again, as had happened four years earlier, the Democrats swept the nominations. Mayor-elect Westring won over nominee Goates by a wide margin.

The biggest vote-getter of the election, however, was successful councilman Howard W. Robinson.

Harold Dwight Westring was born February 3, 1908 in Benjamin, Utah, the son of James Antone and Mary Catherine Thompson Westring. He married Lenore Miles on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1932. Drafted into the service during World War II, Westring was severely wounded and adjudged a medical release for his injuries. Prior to moving to Lehi in 1946, he served as a guard at the Utah State Prison and was later employed as deputy Utah County Assessor and radio dispatcher for the Utah Highway Patrol.

As a two-term city council member, Westring had been extensively involved in the development of the new city-wide sewer system, the new fire station, and the National Guard Armory which required a local contribution of \$10,000. His pet project, however, was the establishment of the standard salary schedule, and uniform pay and leave schedules for city employees.

Mayor Westring's principal accomplishments were upgrading the city waterworks and signing a long-term contract to purchase power from the Intermountain Consumer Power Association rather than Utah Power and Light Company. Both of these projects bear the stamp of an uncanny administrator. Lehi City is still reaping the benefits of his farsightedness.

Expanding and developing new sources of culinary water has been an ongoing process of Lehi City Corporation since 1909. The first major modification to the collection system high on the mountain above Alpine was required just six years after installation. Much of the clay pipe at Schoolhouse Springs had become choked with roots and had to be replaced with cast iron pipe. All main lines in town, many of them also root infested, were replaced through a W.P.A. grant during the drought year of 1935. Water meters were also installed throughout the city during this time.

During Mayor Harold Westring's administration, major improvements were

undertaken at Schoolhouse Springs. An October 1959 survey by engineer Al Sorenson indicated that an additional 144,000 gallons of water per day could be recovered through improved collection methods. Accordingly, the city applied for and received a \$9,000 federal grant to start the project. By the fall of 1962, under the direction of Lehi water superintendent Dale Walker, \$20,000 had been spent in upgrading the works. The original wooden collection boxes, built on the surface and badly decayed, were replaced by a deeply buried intake system which helped prevent contamination and root penetration.

In January 1963, Lehi citizens voted for \$410,000 worth of bonding proposals to improve the water system and purchase a new fire engine. Six months later, the federal government awarded the city a \$267,000 Communities Facilities Administration Grant. Ultimately \$542,800 was expended on the waterworks system including construction of a million-gallon storage tank at the north end of Sixth East. In addition, 80,000 feet of water main was upgraded and fifty additional fire hydrants were installed.

Lehi City originally purchased its electrical power from the Utah County Light and Power Company, which was incorporated on August 2, 1899. From 1926 until 1946, however, the city generated electricity through its own municipal power plant. From 1946 until 1964 the city again purchased its power from Utah Power and Light. But in 1964, Mayor Westring gambled on Lehi's future by signing a twenty-year contract to purchase power from the Intermountain Consumer Power Association. This hydro-generated electricity, from Glen Canyon and Flaming Gorge Dams, was wheeled over Utah Power and Light Company lines to a Lehi substation which was constructed on city property just north of the Rodeo Grounds.

While many Lehi citizens do not realize it, our local power collection and distribution system, which generates \$500,000 profit per year, is the city's greatest single source of revenue aside from property taxes. It is the golden goose that has allowed Lehi City to do much of what it has succeeded in doing over the past three decades. If the town ever loses this "cheap energy" it would be required to

purchase power from more expensive sources. Not only would Lehi citizens be required to pay much more for their electrical needs, but the city would lose approximately twenty-five percent of its annual income, a short-fall which would require either a reduction in city services or an increase in taxes.

At the end of his second term in 1965, Mayor Westring retired from politics. He subsequently moved to Grantsville where his son Ray lived. While wintering in Yuma, Arizona, on February 11, 1978, former mayor Westring suffered a fatal heart attack. His funeral services were held locally a week later under the direction of Lehi;'s American Legion Post 19, over which Mayor had earlier served as adjutant. His burial was in the Grantsville City Cemetery.