

Mayor George F. Tripp-Lehi's 41st Mayor 1984-1989

By Richard Van Wagoner

The administration of Mayor George F. Tripp is the high mark in the ebb and flow of Lehi political doings. Not only did he serve as mayor longer than anyone else in the past three decades, but the accomplishment of his six years in office are unparalleled in the annals of local history.

George came into the world in 1926, the sixth of thirteen children. Although he was born in Hinckley, he grew up on a ranch at Callao. Following his graduation from Lehi High School, he served in the Merchant Marines from 1945-47. He married Shirley Jean Peterson in 1948 (they have six children) after finding work in the booming post-World War II home construction industry.

From 1949-51 he served as a Lehi city electrician. He then became employed with the U.S. Postal Service. Awarded an Outstanding Employee Award, George retired from the post office in 1981. From 1981 until 1990 he was employed as a cabinet maker for Alpine School District being recognized as the district's Employee of the Year from 1989-90.

Prior to his years of civic service, Tripp was extensively involved in LDS Church leadership positions including serving in three bishoprics for twelve years, six years as Bishop of the Lehi First Ward, and a twelve-year stint on three stake high councils.

The first accomplishment of Mayor Tripp's administration in 1984 was successfully obtaining a \$35,000 Community Development Block Grant to rewire the Memorial Building. During a March 6, 1984 council meeting the group voted to approve a \$250,000 loan from the Utah Water Pollution Control Committee to provide sewer services to the East Industrial Park between the Lehi Roller Mills and

the Forks of the Road. To qualify for this money the city annexed a large area which included Lehi Roller Mills, Lehi Farm Equipment, Hadfield Irrigation, Four Seasons, Sunset Rail, American Diesel, Timpanogos Metal, Larsen Floors, Schmidt Diesel, Rancher's Supply, and Fowler Pump.

In the fall of 1985 a special improvement district was created which included all of this property south of U.W. Highway 89 and east of Seventh East. The cost of improvements in this area, which included not only the sewer installation but also the extension of an eight-inch water line eastward from the Wasatch Bank, amounted to \$995,000. The city paid \$704,975 (597,000 from an EDA grant, \$58,400 from UDOT funds and the remaining \$49,575 from general city funds). The remaining \$290,025 was raised by a special tax levied against the properties abutting the streets to be improved.

The city also negotiated with the Union Pacific Railroad at this time to abandon the old sugar factory spur which ran southward from the main line past the Lehi Roller Mills. The city obtained the right-of-way, removed the old track, and constructed sewer lines and a new two-way road connecting State and Main Streets. These improvements, along with a lot of political lobbying, eventually resulted in the new I-15 interchange on East Main.

In 1985, a \$79,000 FEMA grant requiring 12.5% (\$9,875) matching funds from Lehi City and an equal amount from the State of Utah was obtained to construct four new bridges across Dry Creek and to line the creek's channel in areas damaged by the 1982 floods.

In the spring of 1986, Lehi won another state basketball championship by defeating Manti. The most notorious headlines for Lehi in this year concerned the sale of adult magazines at the local Circle K. store. The store came under scrutiny after a KBYU-TV news story of 18 April pointed out that the Lehi store was the only convenience store in Utah Valley that continued to sell adult magazines. Meeting with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the PTA Council, the Lehi City Council, and the Utah Citizens for Decency, the store management

agreed to discontinue the profitable magazines proved Lehi City would pass an ordinance prohibiting their sale. But city attorney Ken Rushton noted that sales of sexually explicit materials are controlled by state law, not city ordinance, and Lehi police chief William Gibbs added that a city ordinance banning the sale of the adult magazines would likely be ruled unconstitutional if it ever came to court.

Circle K District Manager Alan Hansen argued that “every individual has a right to their own opinions and set of values in this country. If that were not so, we would not find Playboy on our shelves. We would also be unable to find copies of Shakespeare, The Book of Mormon, The Bible, or Superman Comic Books.” After much bantering the issue remained unresolved, and the store continued to sell the magazines under-the-counter until it went out of business in 1993.

During 1986, the city purchased four acres of an industrial park area for future development. An \$83,400 Community Development Block Grant requiring \$32,600 matching funds was also obtained to install the Lehi State street water line from Fifth West to Eleventh West along State Street replacing the old four-inch, six inch, and eight-inch lines with a twelve-inch line. A new drain line was also installed along Sixth East from 1250 North to Fifth North and Seventh East. A new water line was laid on Cedar Hollow Road from Ninth East to Sixth East, and a new sewer line from Ninth East to Sixth East then south to 1100 North. A new road was made from Ninth East to Sixth east on Cedar Hollow, and the power line replaced from Sixth East to Twelfth East on Cedar Hollow Road. Most of these improvements were to enhance the area surrounding the new Lehi Junior High School, which opened its doors to students after the Christmas break.

While students were settling in the new building, Lehi City officials were negotiating a purchase of the old junior high from the Alpine School District. During a October 14, 1986 school board meeting it was announced that the district was accepting Lehi city’s offer of \$180,000 for the 7.3 acres of property and buildings. When this transaction occurred the city then owned all of Bocks 40,48 and 49 of Lehi Survey, Plat A, except the business district on Main Street between Center and First West.

During the fall and spring of 1987-88 the old Lehi Junior High building was demolished. Mayor Tripp and the city council had voted to save the newest portion of the building, built in 1967. During the spring of 1988 members of the Lehi Library Board were notified that they had been awarded a \$100,000 matching funds grant for remodeling this structure into a library.

In the fall of 1988, the former cafeteria, kitchen, and band room were remodeled into a new library, a senior citizen complex, and a multi-purpose facility. A \$88,000 Community Development Block Grant with \$105,000 of general city funds were used for the Senior Citizens Center. In addition in 1988 the city also received another \$87,500 in Community Development Block Grant monies for a sewer extension project.

During a December 13, 1988 city council meeting, officials unanimously voted to publish Richard S. Van Wagoner's "Lehi-Portraits of a Utah Town". A \$76,000 allotment for publishing 4,000 copies of the community history was granted. The book was released in the summer of 1990--the 140th anniversary of Lehi Settlement.

With the closeness of the 1990s on the horizon, Lehi City Officials looked forward to a decade of major enhancements. "Our auditors tell us we're in better shape financially than any city in the county," reported Mayor George Tripp in 1988; "we've retired a lot of indebtedness. We've saved about a half million dollars and we hope to get some matching funds."

Ironically, the greatest challenge facing Lehi as it moved into the last decade of the century was the same basic problem that worried the first settlers--water shortage. In 1988, Mayor Tripp reported that the city's culinary supply had about reached the limit. "unless we drill wells, or put in holding tanks or reservoirs, we'll be hurting for fire protection and culinary water." Mayor Tripp advised the Lehi City Council on 12 April that the town was going to be looking at a moratorium on building if a solution was not soon reached.

City Engineer Lorin Powell presented three options to the council, which voted to move ahead on a new pressurized irrigation project and a replacement plan for upgrading the culinary water system. The price tag for these projects when completed was \$4,700,000 which was obtained in 5% interest loans from three Utah State agencies.

In addition, Mayor Tripp's administration provided the funding for the 1990-completed Public Safety Building, which houses the police and fire departments and the municipal court. Officials also accumulated sufficient funds to pay for the Lehi City Administration Building which was completed during Mayor Guy Cash's term.

In addition to Mayor Tripp's many accomplishments during the mayorship, he also served as president of the Timpanogos Special Service District (1984-86); secretary-treasurer of Mountainland Council of Governments (1987-88); chairman of Utah County Council of Governments (1987-88), and vice-chairman of Mountainland Council of Governments (1989). Since 1960, he has continuously served in various leadership capacities with the Lehi Civic Improvement Association.

Although he is supposedly retired, George Tripp continues to contribute his many talents to improving our local way of life. From 1992-93 he served on the Capital City task force for the A.A.R.P. representing Utah County. From 1991 to the present time he has served on the Utah County Planning Commission, serving as vice-chair from 1993-94.

Since 1993, the former mayor has been serving as president of the Lehi Civic Improvement Association. He was also appointed a member of the board of directors of the Hutchings Museum in 1993. His present assignment is to supervise the renovation and restoration of the Memorial Building as the future home of the museum.

As the saying goes, “if you want something done, assign George Tripp to do it.” What a remarkable body of accomplishment for one man! Thank you George, for a lifetime of unselfish service to us all.