

Mayor Ronald V. Smith-Lehi's 43rd Mayor

1992-93

By Richard Van Wagoner

When a mayor resigns or dies in office it seems logical that his successor would be the individual he defeated in the election. That person has technically been mandated as first runner-up. Thus when mayor Guy Cash submitted his resignation on September 29, 1992, should not Dale Ashton, Cash's worthy opponent in the 1989 election have been appointed to the vacated executive seat? The answer is no!

The mechanism for choosing a replacement consists of the city council making nominations then voting on the proposed names. A simple majority of the council is all that is necessary to be appointed. While it is not a requirement, in each of the four cases where a Lehi mayor has either died in office or resigned, his successor has been a current city councilman.

Thus when the city council met during a special executive session on October 13, 1992, Ronald V. Smith, who had been a councilman for nine months, was appointed Lehi's 43rd mayor.

The new mayor was born in Lehi on August 31, 1936, the son of Victor Webb and Deon Carter Smith. His great-grandfather, Joseph J. Smith, was a pioneer blacksmith when our town was still known as Dry Creek.

Ron grew up in the northeast quadrant of town, the area most of us still think of as the "Fourth Ward." He obtained his education in Lehi, graduating from LHS in the class of 1954. The "Lehision" said of the handsome graduating senior with the good-looking hair: "his main interests are girls, girls, and more girls," That description, of course, both then and now, is true of virtually every eighteen year old male on this planet.

After his graduation, Ron attended BYU for a year, worked another, and in

October of 1956 accepted BYU for a year, worked another, and in October of 1956 accepted a call to serve in the Hawaii L.D.S. mission where he worked closely with his mission president, D. Arthur Haycock, personal secretary to all LDS Church presidents from George Albert Smith to Spencer W. Kimball.

After his return in 1958, Ron again found work at Geneva Steel. In the fall of 1960 he returned to B.Y.U. where he graduated in 1963 with a bachelors degree in education. He accepted employment with Granite School district teaching driver education, history, and student counseling at Skyline High School. After 15 years there he transferred to the Granite District Office where he travels about the various high schools in the district teaching driver education. He has been employed by Granite School District now for 31 years.

In 1961, Ron married Kaye Louise Passey in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the proud parents of eight children, five of whom still reside in Lehi. Ron has lived here most of his life although while completing his education he and Kaye lived in Provo and Orem before moving Sandy in 1963. In 1969, he bought the small farm where he had grown up and moved back to Lehi where he has since resided.

In addition to his political career, Mayor Smith is well known for his lengthy service to the LDS Church. Serving for many years in various bishoprics, he was Bishop of the Lehi 11th Ward from 1982-87. From 1988-91 he served as the Lehi North Stake Young Men President.

In 1991, the well-respected Smith was approached by many friends and neighbors who urged him to run for a seat on the Lehi City Council. Although he had been serving on the Lehi Civic Improvement Association for 8 years, he had never considered running for public office. Feeling that "a person has an obligation to make this world a better place to live," He reluctantly consented to being nominated.

Following his election by a wide margin, the amiable new councilmen took

office in January 1992. His initial assignments included the Planning and Zoning Commission. This was an especially challenging position because of Lehi's explosive growth. That building boom continued unabated during the fourteen-month of his term as mayor.

Many long-term Lehi residents have resisted the rapid growth of our community which grew from 8,250 in 1988 to an estimated 12,500 today. This building boom resulted in many problems for Mayor Smith's administration. Focusing its attention on future water, sewer, street and park needs, the council tabled all annexation and subdivision requests while an intensive, five-month study of the city's infrastructure was undertaken by city engineer Lorin Powell.

Using the material from the study and with the help of city attorney Ken Rushton, the administration developed a "Capital Improvement Plan." As part of this strategy, the owners of each newly-built home were required to pay a one-time impact fee of \$1000. This revenue was specifically intended to improve roads, water and sewer facilities and to better address the community's park and recreation needs.

Mayor Smith acknowledges the contributions of earlier administrations to projects which were completed during his tenure. The new East Main I-15 interchange, first planned during Mayor George Tripp's administration, opened in 1993. And Mayor Smith and his councilors continued to provide financial support to the Memorial Building restoration project. The Smith Administration also planned a new electrical substation to meet the city's future power needs, which is currently under construction at 5th West and 3rd North.

Additional accomplishments during the Smith years were improved curb, gutter and sidewalk facilities in several areas of town. Many roads, still unrepaved from the extensive damage necessitated by the pressurized irrigation system, were also improved and resurfaced. Continuous efforts to upgrade the water and sewer systems, improve public safety and provide recreation and library facilities were also highlight of 1992-93.

While we pay homage to our elected officials, most of the day-to-day work is accomplished by city workers. Acknowledging the more than 100 dedicated employees of Lehi City Corporation who made his administration successful, Mayor Smith lauded: “The city crews work hard to make Lehi a great place to live. It was a joy to work with the city employees and the city council for the time that I did.”

Mayor Smith was not re-elected in the fall of 1993. But his wife was glad to get him back again from his long years of public service. “I am very proud of my family,” the former mayor related, “at this stage of my life my greatest joy is spending time with my children and grandchildren.” Summarizing his personal philosophy, Ron added: “I firmly believe that a person should first and foremost serve their family, second they should serve their church, and third they should render some service to make their community a better place to live.” That conviction, heeded throughout his life, has made Ron Smith the exemplary man that he is.