

Mayor Term of Bill Gibbs

By Richard Van Wagoner

Local political activity during the fall of 1993 was a rather subdued roll-up-your sleeves-and-knock-on-doors type of campaign. A coalition of four, including the former chief of police and two former city councilmen, styling themselves the “Citizens Group for Change”--challenged incumbent Mayor Ronald V. Smith and sitting council members Carolyn Player and Steven Swenson.

Mayoralty candidate Bill Gibbs and his running mates Reed Sunderland, Wayne Carlton, and Dee Ray Russon promised among other things “an open mind, “open and friendly communication with city employees,” open discussions on the city master plan, industrial, business and residential growth, historical sites, parks and recreation needs, and a “helpful and courteous atmosphere within the the city offices”.

Election Day, November 2, 1993 resulted in a sweeping victory for the “citizens Group for Chang”--all its candidates prevailed. “The vote bears out the fact that the people of Lehi want change ,” said Mayor-elect Gibbs when he was informed of his victory. The new leaders, three of them retired and able to devote full time to their position, have now been in office for nine months.

William L. (Bill) Gibbs was born April 29, 1928 in Boise, Idaho to Earl S. and Mabel Lytle Gibbs. He was raised mostly in Vale, Oregon (75 miles west of Boise). His mother, now 88, still lives in the area at Ontario, Oregon.

Bill’s father farmed and worked construction so the family moved several times. Although he did considerable farm work as a youth, Bill’s first major job was as shed foreman for Simplot Idaho Produce, supervising the grading and shipping of potatoes. He next moved to Redmond, Oregon, where he ran a cellar crew and served as a reserve fire foreman (for ranger firemen).

After breaking his left foot participating in a rodeo, Bill recuperated and

enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard for three years. He attended boot camp at Cape May, New Jersey, then received advanced training at a yeoman/storekeeper school. On May 21, 1931, he sailed out of Alameda, California (near Oakland), on the flagship Taney. During twenty-one months at sea, he was involved in weather cruises and air/sea rescues, experienced two trips to Japan, and also docked at the Hawaiian Islands, Alaska and Midway.

In September of 1952, Bill married Marie Webb in the Salt Lake Temple. He soon transferred to a shore job in the Coast Guard's electronic section in San Francisco. While working there, Bill and Marie lived in Oakland, and he attended the Oakland Peace Officer's Training School.

In order to begin a job with the Vacaville, California, Police Department in August of 1953, Bill used up sixty days of acquired leave to meet the Coast Guard's October release date. The young couple remained at Vacaville (thirty miles south of Sacramento) for two years.

In July of 1955, Bill began working for the California Highway Patrol. He completed twelve weeks of training at the C.H.P. Academy in Sacramento. In October, 1955, he transferred to Norwalk, California. While working there he managed to complete an A.A. degree in Police Administration at East Los Angeles Jr. College.

In 1958, Bill transferred to Long Beach College in order to earn a bachelor's degree in public administration. He was unable to finish his degree there before being transferred to Quincy. While stationed there he successfully passed the sergeant examination.

After a September, 1960 transfer to Sacramento, he finished his degree at Sacramento State College. Despite the stress of working full-time and attending college, he was able to meet this challenge and graduate in May, 1961 with a B.S. degree in public administration.

After graduation, he worked as a sergeant assigned to the research and

development section at C.H. P. headquarters at Sacramento.

In April, 1964, he transferred to Placerville, California, to obtain additional field experience. He worked as a field sergeant until 1967 when he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant of field operations at Baldwin Park. He remained there as executive lieutenant until 1969 when he transferred to Stockton, California, where he was subsequently promoted to captain.

In September of 1970, he accepted a position as Area Commander for the city of Fresno, California, and the surrounding county. In 1972, he had surgery for a back injury. Recurring back pain led to an early retirement from the highway patrol in 1978.

For awhile, Bill sold real estate and focused on getting his back back in shape. After this he worked as supervisor of security forces for the Internal Revenue Service in Fresno.

Bill accepted the position of Lehi Chief of Police in February, 1982 during the administration of Mayor Bud Ellison. He retired from this position on August 1, 1993. Marie, his wife of thirty-seven years, died of cancer in February 1989. The couple had three children. Their oldest son, Earl, is a captain flying for United Airlines out of San Francisco. Their second son, William L. Gibbs, Jr. (Billy), taught in the ROTC program at BYU before working for the Special Forces and C.I.A. He has worked for Martin-Marietta (Denver) and is currently seeking a master's degree there.

Their daughter, Mari, (Mrs. Brad Strong), lives in Alpine and works as a loan officer in the Orem Branch of the Bank of American Fork. Mayor Bibbs boasts a total of eighteen grandchildren. He was able to share his hobby of riding horses in the mountains until back surgery limited this. He used to own, (with son-in-laws Brad Strong) several Missouri Fox Trotters. But he now owns just one.

Mayor Gibbs, who married Linda Lee in 1990, said that he has come to love Lehi and expects to live here the rest of his life. He described strong ties and

feelings for Lehi's "wonderful people."

The mayor feels that his greatest challenge as our chief executive is centered around Lehi's recent phenomenal growth. Specifically, he is concerned about bringing internal organization and infrastructure up to a level capable of dealing with our sudden population and building boom. Lehi's population is now approximately 12,500 (an increase of 50% in the past four years) and a current moratorium on subdivision building was enacted recently due primarily to the over-loaded sewer system.

The mayor thinks that the moratorium will likely be lifted in the early part of 1995 provided there has been a firm decision on how to ultimately resolve the town's potential effluent waste overload. Other issues of major concern during the Gibbs administration are developing a multi-purpose facility for youth and the arts, more parks for recreational purposes, and an increase in local business activity.

The congenial mayor would like his administration to be remembered as an honest and hard-working one, a regime focused on meeting the needs of the citizenry to the fullest extent of the city's resources. He realizes that accomplishing this would be a real challenge. "Sometimes I've wondered about my sanity," he laughed when asked if he had any regrets about entering the stressful world of local politics, "but I'm proud to have been in public service one way or another, most of my life."

And so we close our nine-month long biographical series on Lehi's mayors. The political careers of forty-four men from Mayor Silas Barnes to mayor Bill Gibbs have now been documented for posterity. Community life, particularly the high quality of existence we have in Lehi, would not be possible without the unselfish dedication of these local politicians. While we have focused primarily on the lives of the mayors, we acknowledge the civic contributions of thousands of men and women who, in a multitude of ways, have made Lehi a great place to live for the past 144 years.

