

Editors' Introduction

"Great men are like mountains, better seen from afar." Andrew Bonar Law's dictum about biography does not hold true of Spencer W. Kimball. We have seen and studied him as family man, businessman, civic leader, churchman, and prophet. While unquestionably an imperfect human, he had a consistency about him that most of us can only wonder at. The public and private man were one. He looks the same up close and from afar.

When *Brigham Young University Studies* proposed a special issue devoted to President Kimball, who died 5 November 1985, we happily accepted the responsibility for editing the issue. It provided us an opportunity to show our great personal regard for a remarkable man.

In this issue are gathered commentaries about his administration as President, his unique speaking style, a relative's reminiscence, the observations of journalists who watched him both on- and offstage as he traveled the world as a Church leader, several poets' responses to what he did and what he was, a chronicling of his childhood as he described it in his sermons, an acknowledgment of his commitment to the cause of the Lamanites, and a gathering of anecdotes and quotations showing his genial sense of humor.

But much of the content of this issue is provided by Spencer W. Kimball himself—some previously unpublished poems, a collection of photographs that illustrate his life, a large portion of his missionary journal, his college experiences, an extemporaneous stake conference address from the middle of his Apostle years to show the speaking style and the subject matter typical of so much of his work as a General Authority.

As this issue goes to press a year after President Kimball's death, we still sense his presence. Of his life we can say, quoting a line from one of his poems, "nothing's lost that fits into the great eternal Plan."

—Ronald W. Walker
—Edward L. Kimball

Ronald W. Walker is a senior research historian for the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, and an associate professor of history, Brigham Young University. Edward L. Kimball is Ernest L. Wilkinson Professor of Law at Brigham Young University.