

Thoughts and Comments on a Blessing Given to K. Gunn McKay by President James E. Faust on Friday, August 4, 2000 in the West Boardroom in the Old Church Administration Building.

Background

Grandpa and Grandma McKay returned home from their mission in Singapore around the end of May for medical reasons. After spending several weeks in the hospital and undergoing a myriad of tests, church leaders felt it was best for them to return to the United States and there receive medical treatment. At the time, doctors in Singapore felt Tuberculosis may be the problem even though they did not have any empirical evidence to document their suspicions.

Grandpa was experiencing tremendous pain in his chest. Pain killers were barely scratching the close-to-unbearable discomfort he was feeling. After several weeks grandpa had a new doctor who ordered new x-rays and scans. These tests showed that grandpa definitely had a "mass" growing outside the lung in the area called the pleura. They decided to perform exploratory surgery. The surgeon was able to get to the growth enough to take a sample for a biopsy.

The biopsy came back as positive for cancer - mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer that is typically inoperable and non-responsive to radiation and chemotherapy. Uncle John Jackson said he felt it had been there for a good while and that his guess was 3 to 6 months left to live.

A Blessing From a Servant of God

President Faust became aware of grandpa's situation through his son Marcus that used to be on grandpa's staff when he was in congress. Grandpa became acquainted with President Faust many years ago. President Faust was the campaign manager for Ted Moss when he first ran for the office of U.S. Senator. Senator Moss won that race and represented Utah for 18 years. It was about that time that President Faust and Senator Moss encouraged grandpa to run for congress.

Completely unsolicited, President Faust offered to give grandpa a blessing. He called grandpa and told him to set up a time through Elder Marlin Jensen to come to his office for a blessing once he had received all the information about his condition. President Faust is a very busy man. His responsibilities would bury a much younger and well-trained business executive. We cannot begin to appreciate the responsibilities and demands placed on the general authorities of the church.

This meant a lot to grandpa for a couple of reasons. First, he holds President Faust and all of the brethren of the church in such high regard as the anointed servants of the Lord. He knows of the mantle they receive and the inspiration that comes with their respective callings. Secondly, grandpa and grandma feel as if they have received so many blessings. To quote grandpa, they have been "blest mightily by the Lord". Grandpa felt that with so many blessings, how could they ask for more, i.e., a blessing from someone like President Faust. Third, grandpa knows how busy general authorities are.

August 4th was the day arranged for grandpa to come to church headquarters. The following

people also attended the meeting with President Faust: Donna McKay, Marl McKay, Ruston and Lisa McKay, Chris and Mavis Stevenson, Chad and Wendy McKay, Dave and Ruth Jenkins, Rachel Sedgwick, Elizabeth Seamons, and Kolene Jackson.

We met in the lobby of the old church administration building prior to be escorted in to the West Boardroom. This building dates back to approximately 1917 (?). All the members of the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency have their offices in this building. It is beautiful. The West Boardroom is lined with beautiful wood panels. A large marble fireplace dominates the center of the East wall. Above the fireplace was an original painting by Harry Anderson of Jesus surrounded by children. There are beautiful drapes that adorn the large west windows. The ceiling is ornate with simple decoration and some gold leaf. Around the outer part of the room was leather bench seating. In the middle of the room were two large conference tables with bevelled glass tops. The shorter of the two tables stretched West to East. It had three leather chairs where the First Presidency of the church sits during meetings. The other table was perpendicular and had six leather chairs on each side, one for each of the twelve apostles. On the North end of the room was a portrait of President Gordon B. Hinckley.

We took the bench seats around the outer part of the room. Shortly, President Faust entered the room. We all stood and grandpa introduced each of us as President Faust shook our hands. He then invited grandpa to sit in one of the chairs where the first presidency sits. He instructed the rest of us to sit around the conference table. About this time Elder Jensen came into the room and shook hands with everyone there. He joined grandpa and President Faust at the head of the table. He then took the next twenty minutes or more just visiting with grandpa and grandma.

Here are some of the things that were said:

- Grandpa was a "hero" to Elder Jensen and President Faust. President Faust told how much they admired grandpa in both his congressional capacity as well as a member of the church.
- President Faust told of how he knew grandpa's mother and what a wonderful woman she was. He admired how she could do so much as a widow with a large family. (As a side note, President Faust was the chairman of the committee that selected grandpa's mother as the "Utah Mother of the Year".)
- Grandpa told that his mother was a woman of great faith and prayer. "She would kneel at her bedside and arise with answers", grandpa said. On one occasion she took grandpa aside who had been hurting for months with an injury to his knee from football. It was not getting better. His mother rubbed consecrated oil on the knee and then prayed to Heavenly Father that it would be restored. From that moment on it never gave him any more problem.
- President Faust commented on what an outstanding job grandpa had done in honoring the McKay name and his side of the family. He mentioned that with the incredible charm and charisma of President David O. McKay, it was easy to feel overshadowed and overlooked as a McKay.
- Grandpa told the story of how he struggled with the question of keeping his grocery store open on Sunday or not. He heard a talk given by Elder Hunter on keeping the Sabbath

day holy. For every scripture Elder Hunter used grandpa would try to rationalize with another. One day he called President McKay and asked him his opinion. President McKay said he would be up in a few days and they would talk. President McKay sat in grandpa's store and let grandpa do most of the talking. He left without really saying what he thought. Grandpa decided to shut down the store on Sunday. A while later grandpa went to an open house for one of the new wards in the valley. President McKay was there and told grandpa he was aware of his decision to close on Sunday and thanked him for doing the right thing and honoring the McKay name.

- Grandpa told the story of how he worked with the Speaker of the House, Carl Albert, in drawing up legislation that would protect genealogy. About the time they were ready to pass the bill, Alex Haley wrote his famous book "Roots". All the publicity from the book helped get the votes needed to pass the bill.
- President Faust asked Elder Jensen to say a few words. Elder Jensen told how it was grandpa that called him to be a bishop in Huntsville thirty years ago. He went on to say how much he admired and looked up to grandpa. It was obvious that grandpa was one of his mentors in life.
- President Faust asked grandma if she had any thing she wanted to say. Grandma said she was not a person of many words. She commented on what a good companion grandpa was. She told her family how much she loved them and how much she loved the Lord.
- President Faust talked about Mo Udall, congressman from Arizona, that at one time was contemplating a run for the presidency of the country. On one occasion he was sitting in the West Boardroom with Elder Faust and Elder Faust suggested he see President Kimball to get a blessing for his Parkinson Disease. He refused to see him for some reason or another. President Faust reflected on the scene and wished he would have dragged Brother Udall into President Kimball's office to get a blessing.

Then President Faust invited grandpa to move his chair out so they could perform the ordinance. He asked grandpa who he would like to give the blessing. Grandpa said that was up to them, but, perhaps Elder Jensen could anoint and then President Faust give the blessing. Elder Jensen then anointed grandpa with consecrated oil. There was emotion in his voice as he performed the anointing.

President Faust then invited all the priesthood holders to come and stand in the circle. I stood to the left of President Faust and laid my hand on top of his as he laid his hand on the head of grandpa. It was an awesome experience to stand in the circle with such spiritual giants. President Faust began the blessing and one could feel the presence of the spirit.

Many things were said in the blessing. At the risk of mis-quoting or mis-communicating what was said in the blessing, I will attempt to convey some of the things mentioned by President Faust to the best of my ability and recollection:

- He rebuked the cancer that was in grandpa's body

- He said that grandpa's pain would be relieved
- He said that grandpa's body would be responsive to the treatment he was going to receive from his doctors and nurses
- He "evoked" all the blessings he had ever received up to this point - when he was blest as a baby, ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood, as a missionary, stake president, etc.
- His life would be extended to yet bear his testimony to his family and others
- He has been a good example to his family and many others. His service to his country was noted and the influence he has had on so many people
- He would be allowed to live until he completed his "time and season" upon the earth

After the blessing grandpa stood and one could see how deeply moved he was by the blessing. he went to shake President Faust's hand, but, President Faust said, "ah, come on and give me a hug". They stood there embracing for some time. He then shook Elder Jensen's hand. Elder Jensen said something to the effect that after that blessing by President Faust, in two years he would volunteer to be grandpa's campaign manager to run against Jim Hansen for congress. Bishop Chad McKay said that he was going to first call them on a mission.

President Faust and Elder Jensen left. President Faust said, "stay here all you want to visit". Grandpa took the time to share his testimony to his children and reemphasized the importance to help each other and that nothing the world had to offer could substitute for family. Grandma bore her testimony and expressed her love for her children.

This time with President Faust was a wonderful experience for all of us. It was a sacred experience that is not for the general public. Mom and I share this with you because you are family and this experience had to do with you grandfather. It is intended to strengthen our testimonies and give us faith for the future.

As a concluding note, we do not want to interpret this blessing. It was not given to us. Therefore it is not our right. We are not necessarily entitled to know what the Lord has in mind. In grandpa's blessing we should not assume he is going to live another five years, or, ten years. We do not know. The blessing said until he completed his "time and season" upon the earth. Is that two months or is that two years? We do not know and we should not make any assumptions. We were blest to be there and now we just wait on the Lord in faith and see what happens.