

LETTERS

Dear Dialogue editors,

I received my *Dialogue* magazine April 19, 2000. I have enjoyed it very much, especially "Bearing Your Sanctimony" by Neal and Rebecca Chandler. Rebecca's enthusiastic sharing of *Exponent II* in Relief Society meeting and the response she received is the kind I receive too. I love her desire to share women's initiative expressions of personal thoughts.

"The History of *Dialogue*: Part I: The Early Years, 1965-1971" by Devery S. Anderson is a record of faithful endeavors by many honest members wanting to share their gifts of the spirit and succeeding valiantly.

"Mormon Psychohistory" by Mark Koltko-Rivera is excellent. I especially enjoyed it because I am a "Joseph Smith convert" too. When will we be able to believe the truths he taught without being assumed to be troublemakers? I prefer to believe truth with evidence instead of prefabricated doctrines that denounce the revelations to Joseph Smith. "It hasn't been revealed yet." So they say!

Mrs. Rhoda Thurston
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Dear Editors,

I am writing this as a "Letter to the Editor"; however, I shall use the format that I used for ten years when I was writing "Among the Mormons" for *Dialogue* (see vol. 3, no. 1, 1968). It is in response to Devery S. Anderson's fine article, "A History of *Dialogue*. . . ."

AMONG THE MORMONS

by
RALPH W. HANSEN

THE EVIL THAT MEN DO
LIVES AFTER THEM,
THE GOOD IS OFT INTERRED
WITH THEIR BONES.
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar
Act 3, sc. 2, 1, 78 (Antony)

Devery S. Andersen's [sic] article on the founding and first years of *Dialogue* was very comprehensive and brought back many memories which are not included in his piece. I would like to complete the record for your readers by offering some personal recollections. First the author notes that among others who participated in the founding years was Ralph Hanson. I will gladly give him back his "O" if he will give me back my "E."

In 1965 I was the University Archivist and Manuscripts Librarian at Stanford University, and, because of Stanford's munificent salaries, I was also required to hold a part-time, paid position as Palo Alto City Historian, duties which occupied two evenings a week and all day Saturday. I confess that I was completely in the dark about the subversive movement which resulted in *Dialogue* when a young man (who is now only six years younger than I am) approached me in the rotunda of the Stanford Library. He introduced himself as Eugene England and said that he was working on a new journal to be produced by the Mormon students and faculty at Stanford. He wanted me to help him obtain library addresses so they could solicit subscriptions.

Well, I told him if they were depending on library subscriptions to help the journal get off the ground they best think again. Then this sage and older librarian told Gene that journals come and go, and that the chances of success were modest, at best. So much for sage. Then England's

“charisma” (Anderson’s description) kicked in. Not discouraged by my heartening advice, Gene asked me if I would be willing to write for *Dialogue*. He said that what the founders had in mind were bibliographical essays on recent Mormon publications, be they books, periodicals, dissertations or whatever. At this time in my life, all I needed was another assignment, but having had a life-long inability to say “no” I agreed to do what I could, and thus was born “Among the Mormons” as a regular feature of the journal.

Gene also asked me to look up *Dialogue* and see if the title was already in use. It was, but as Anderson explained, complaints by the Lutherans notwithstanding, the title would stand. I did not feel so bad about appropriating the title “Among the Mormons” from a recently published book.

It was decided that “Among the Mormons” would be published in each quarterly. The spring issue would cover books, pamphlets, records and photo-reproductions or reprints. The summer issue would list dissertations and theses, and the winter issue would be devoted to periodicals, including newspaper articles, if significant. The autumn issue would consist of bibliographical essays, either by guest writers or, if none could be found, by me.

As any bibliographer would know, an attempt at such a survey would be a formidable task, but I would be crass not to admit that I had a “secret” ally. Some years before *Dialogue* was conceived, Chad Flake of the Special Collections Department at BYU had organized librarians at the Church Historian’s Office, the Salt Lake Public Library, the Utah State Historical Society, and the library at Utah State University to participate in sharing new information about the broad subjects of “Mormonism” and “Utah.” This in-

formation was then compiled by Chad and shared with the participating libraries through a semi-monthly newsletter, which Chad kindly sent to me. With this as a basis, I was on my way and only had to spend some lunch hours and late after-work evening hours doing additional bibliographical research, which I then shared with Chad. The newsletter was called MOR-MON AMERICANA and had a very limited circulation. While this plagiarism may seem dishonest, I gave my source and Chad frequent credit for the assistance I received. I produced four columns a year for ten or so years, about 40 columns.

At some point I also became book review editor for a brief time. This was a position for which I was eminently unsuited, but when a journal must be published with volunteer help, one does what one has to do. The biggest problem, in brief, was that the students who were so eager and essential for the start-up years had the nerve to graduate and drift away. As Anderson described, founding board members also left and in 1970 Gene England went to St. Olaf’s College. Wes Johnson found himself under an incredible workload, which is true, which hardly describes our plight. Not mentioned was the fact that *Dialogue*’s headquarters were now in a frame cottage on fraternity row, and during the “war” years, this was often the location of confrontations between the war protestors and the police. When, one night, shots were fired in the vicinity of the office, Wes decided not to use the office after dark.

During this period *Dialogue* was close to collapsing for the want of human assistance. I remember one night, sitting with Wes in the *Dialogue* office, staring at a pile of unread manuscripts and wondering how we could

cope with only the two of us, and then came the final blow: Wes was leaving Stanford. Fortunately Robert Rees of UCLA came to the rescue and a limping *Dialogue* moved to Los Angeles. Current files with all necessary equipment were sent to UCLA, but then we had the problem of what to do with the "archival" records, which were quite voluminous. We boxed them up and placed them in my VW van to transport them to the Johnson home on the campus. Wes was actually selling his home and soon questions arose as to where we could store the archives. We had only a few days before the movers were to come and it was left up to me as what to do with the files. Stanford and the church were at odds over the race question, and I decided not to offer them to my own institution. BYU and the Church Historian's Office, for obvious reasons, did not have strong appeal, so I arbitrarily contacted Everett Cooley at the University of Utah, who agreed to accept the *Dialogue* archives.

Through the grapevine I heard that there was some dissatisfaction with my decision, but I was only a bit player, and the final curtain was falling on the Stanford stage. Action was needed, and I have never feared

plunging ahead. There was no longer an audience at Stanford, so I took my silent bow as the curtain closed.

My work was done, or so I thought, but Editor Rees asked me to continue my efforts, which I did for five additional years until a new editor, Mary Bradford, was appointed in 1975. I had earlier requested my release, but I assured Robert that I would stay on until Mary found a new bibliographer. When this was accomplished, I was free at last. Unfortunately, "Among the Mormons" did not survive and was ultimately dropped from *Dialogue*.

It didn't sink in until recently that five years before I met Eugene, I wrote a column for *BYU Studies* (3:4) called "Mormon Bibliography 1960." What goes around comes around! Did Gene know about this column when he approached me? Probably not, but when he met me at Stanford, I was a librarian/archivist, and as we all know, "librarians know all the answers!"

Ralph W. Hansen
Boise, Idaho