Hugh Nibley's Brush with Death

by Emily Holsinger

The neat thing about taking a class from Hugh Nibley is that you get to meet the man behind the myths, the man who knows everything. The odd part is that you always end up with more questions than when you started out. But you usually learn something along the way. In class one day he casually mentions that he knows what it's like to die, because, as a matter of fact, he has. (The question is, did all of him come back?) Instantly my ears perk up. This is one time I'm going to get some answers out of him. But how? Inspiration! I approach him after class. "Brother Nibley, I'm doing an article on life after death. Would you mind if I interviewed you?" He glances up at me—"Have you done any reading on the subject?" "Well, no," I stammer, "not lately, but..." He cuts in, "You go read those two books by Dr. Moody and then come and talk to me." End of discussion.

Dutifully I check out Life After Life by Dr. Raymond Moody and read it. (Actually, it's the best thing I do all weekend.) Next Monday I corner Brother Nibley: "I've read about it. Now can I talk to you?" "Well," he says reluctantly, "I suppose you can drop by my office this afternoon."

I'm there at 3:00, and I'm kind of nervous. Why am I pestering such a busy man? Nevertheless, I'm ready with a list of questions. "Is Brother Nibley expecting you?" asks his secretary. "Well, I think so," I reply. She knocks on his door and opens it a crack. His office is very dimly lit. I want...
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to peep in too, but I don’t dare. “A student is here to see you,” she announces, and out he comes, heading straight for the candy jar that’s on her desk. “here, have some gum drops. Stuff’ll rot your teeth out.” He pops a few in his mouth and sits down. How do I begin?

SR: Brother Nibley, I wanted to ask you about your experience after you died.
HN: Oh yes. Say, have you seen “The Faith of an Observer”? I tell the whole story there. You can rent it easily enough for a couple of bucks, I think. (Boy, he’s not going to tell me anything. But then he goes on.) It was during an operation and everything went bad and I was officially declared out... and I was expecting it...
SR: They declared you brain-dead?

Eavesdroppings

This week the Eavesdropper sat next to you in Humanities 101. On Tuesday he wore a tweed jacket and heard you eating in the CougarEat with your roommates. Thursday he stayed home sick and watched “Wheel of Fortune” and “Days,” but on Friday he shared an elevator with you in the Kimball Tower. Today he’s watching you read this article. You know the Eavesdropper well; he’s always just around the next corner. Here’s what he thought:

BYU vs. #2 PEPPERDINE

BYU Men’s Volleyball
White Supremacists Seek Refuge in Utah

At midnight in the sleepy town of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, all is peaceful. Crickets chirp in the soft, green grass. The lonely call of an owl may occasionally be heard. The moon is bright. All seems calm. But at dawn, the peace will end and two bitter factions will renew their hostilities. Second graders will push classmates in the dirt and spit in their faces. High school students will hold rallies and burn crosses on “the enemy’s” front lawns. Adults will make violent threats.

In the 1970’s, Coeur d’Alene began to take on the aura of a troubled battle field, losing its ideal picturesque quality. This was when the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ Christian decided to establish a branch of their organization there.

Why Coeur d’Alene? “It seemed like the perfect place,” says Richard Butler, pastor and head of the church, “there are no blacks, no Jews, and not many people of Indian or Chinese descent.”

The Church of Jesus Christ Christian...