

# 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 am 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 you 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?*

HN: Not brain-dead. . .brain's always been dead. . .I just stopped breathing you know. I was on an operation table.

SR: *How long ago was this?*

HN: It was when I was 25 years old. It was January 3. Uh-hum. 19. . .19. . .say, did you get both his books?

SR: *Well, I could only find one in the library.*

HN: Oh I have both of them. I'll bring them tomorrow. Did you know he was here on campus? Sure, I spent the whole day with him and his wife. We had lunch. Why, we exchanged books!

SR: *Is Dr. Moody still interested in this or has he moved on to some new project?*

HN: Well, he's a medical doctor. He went back to his practice. He satisfied himself and went back. He had all sorts of fabulous offers, you know. They wanted to write a TV series on it, they wanted to make movies of it. But that was not his purpose. He wanted to satisfy himself and he did. And then he went back to his practice. An honest man. He didn't cash in on it at all.

SR: *Before your experience were you scared*

*of death at all?*

HN: No, I was curious. Very, very curious. I had faith in the gospel, but of course you do get very curious. I was eaten up with curiosity at that time. It was a time of depression, too. I wanted to know the answer. . .Brother Cowley told me I would get the answer. In three days I did. That's part of the story. . .my wife had exactly the same sort of experience.

SR: *Did it correspond to your experience?*

HN: Well yes, I mean it was the same sort of thing. But hers was a totally different reason for going.

SR: *A different reason for her to go?*

HN: Well of course. Two people don't have the same reason for going. She wasn't curious ever, but she found out something important, very important, that she had to do which she would NEVER have undertaken to do if she hadn't been there. So these things do happen. . .(he turns to his secretary). You never saw, did you? (In reference to the movie in which he tells his story).

Secretary: I did. They showed it in the JSB. . .that was the premier of the show as far as

public. . .there was a big crowd.

HN: Oh yes, I'd forgotten about that. The students started guessing my age. They always do that! They ran all the way from fifty to ninety. Isn't that something?

SR: *But you're 76, right?*

HN: No! Absolutely not. Way off. 77.

SR: *(Our interview is obviously winding down, and its definitely time to go. But I can't resist.) Brother Nibley, I really enjoy your class.*

HN: You're in it?

SR: *Yes, I—*

HN: That's a contradiction in terms. She's in it and yet she enjoys it. . . (already he's heading back into his office with a fresh scoop of gumdrops).

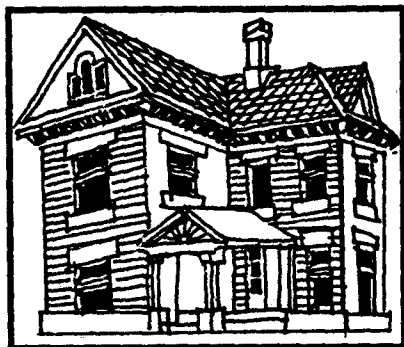
I don't get the movie, but I do buy a copy of the footnoted and annotated soundtrack. . . You see, the neat thing about talking to Hugh Nibley is that you can say you've done it, but it's as frustrating as turning on a faucet full blast and trying to drink every drop— you always miss about 70% of it. At least the soundtrack goes as slowly as I do.

## 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

## BYU vs. #2 PEPPERDINE

BYU Men's Volleyball



# Student Review

BYU's *Unofficial* Magazine

year 2, issue 10

Provo, Utah

November 4, 1987

## For Those Who Missed the Rights Symposium...

by Michelle Youtz

"Human Rights . . . An American Problem (Our Responsibility)" was the theme for the 1987 Human Rights Symposium held October 20-23. The focus on domestic issues, says Gena Edvalson, symposium committee chairman, was intended to recognize the internal problems of our country. "We can get too caught up in international issues . . . balance between national and international issues should be maintained," says Edvalson.

Unofficially, the string of lectures began on Monday, Oct. 19, with an off-campus presentation by Jack Healey, executive director of Amnesty International. Healey broached U.S. human rights problems such as the policy of sending Iranian and El Salvadoran refugees back to their native lands only

## 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

