



LAWRENCE (LARRY) C. PAINTER 1950-1976

Larry is invariably described by family and friends as friendly, likable and kind hearted. He never hesitated to befriend strangers, and more than once offered a bed to someone with no place to sleep. He was a son who loved and honored his mother and liked to bring her flowers, a grandson who sat beside his ailing grandmother and patiently taught her how to play solitaire when she could no longer read or crochet, a protective older brother who cared how life was going, and a friend and confidant who was never too busy to listen. Larry's life was short, but he had a substantial impact on others.

Lawrence (Larry) C. Painter was born on July 28, 1950, in Ogden, Utah, the third child of Eleanor Crowther Painter and Laurence Virgil Painter. Larry was named after his father, as well as his grandfather, Albert Lawrence Crowther. As was customary then, Eleanor stayed in the hospital for a week after giving birth to Larry before bringing him home to join his excited sisters, Trudy and LeAnn. Growing up, Larry was slender, active and agile, with light brown hair and eyes so blue that people often remarked upon them. He was only two years old when his parents built a red brick house across the street from Eleanor's parents in Harrisville. Young as he was, Larry followed Virgil's Uncle Homer Mortensen, closely observing everything he and the work crews did as they built the house.

When Larry was five, he started kindergarten in Pleasant View. One day when the bus returned from school, neither Larry nor his friend, Jerel Nebeker, were among the kids who got off the bus, and a check of the school proved they were no longer there. Their parents began a frantic search for the missing five-year-olds. They were located a great deal later not far from home. The boys had decided it would be more fun to walk home from school than to ride the bus. They had walked for miles, and though they were tired, they did not get lost or quit walking.

More than once, Larry gave his mother a scare. Once, the neighborhood, boys were playing in Bill Shurtleff's barn, and Davy Shurtleff, not realizing Larry was so close, threw a pitchfork which struck Larry in the face. The tines punctured Larry's forehead running in a line an inch or two above his eye. The wound bled profusely. The boys climbed down from the hay loft and ran across the street yelling for help with Davy in the lead. Larry was having difficulty seeing. Eleanor heard them and ran from the house to find Larry, his head and face covered in blood. She said he appeared to be fatally wounded. Remarkably calm during any crises, Eleanor carefully swabbed the wounds, and took him to the doctor to be patched, and he lived.

In 1958, Larry's grandfather, Frank Painter, died. A month later, Larry turned eight and was baptized in the font of the LDS Harrisville Ward meeting house by Lynn Edwards. That fall the family bought Frank Painter's farm and moved to Farr West. Larry, and his siblings, LeAnn, Ava, and, soon, Kirt rode the bus to the Plain City Elementary School. The children joined 4-H and raised calves which they showed at Plain City's Black and White Days. The event was held on a large block adjacent to the school that usually served as the school playground.

Like his dad, Larry loved to be outdoors. He spent many hours playing in the fields. He enjoyed playing tag, hide and seek, Mother may I, and kick the can with his siblings and neighbors. He rode his bike and the family pony, wrestled with Kirt and Frank, followed the combines cutting hay and grain, and made forts in the hay stack. Virgil hung a thirty-foot rope from the barn's metal rafters which the children used to swing on from one tall haystack to the other. Larry also took his turn gathering eggs, feeding the horses and cows, milking, and doing chores. There were often mishaps. One morning Larry and LeAnn were hurrying to pitch enough hay into the feed bins for eighty calves before the school bus came. Larry swung backwards, catching LeAnn in the eye with the handle of his pitchfork. For a long time, she had a very black eye. Larry had his share of cuts, bruises, bites and stitches, which seemed to come with farm life.

The children were happy living on the farm. Virgil was energetically making improvements. He cemented the corrals and ditch banks, installed new gates and culverts, erected a commercial sized metal roof replacement on the old barn. In the months before Lenore was born, he began remodeling the house to make it more modern and large enough for a family of nine. Virgil had many plans for the farm, but soon found that even with help it was too much to run the farm and his beauty school and salons. In spite of all Eleanor had to do with seven children ages twelve and under, she competently handled the emergencies that arose on the farm such as when the horses and cows got loose, when the roof blew off the barn, when bats flew down the chimney into the living room, and upon finding snakes curled up on beds.

After Eleanor's father died, Larry's parents decided to move back to Harrisville. They bought the five acre lot next to Eleanor's mother, Ellen Crowther, and built a house. Larry's sixth grade year he attended Lomond View Elementary. When he entered Wahlquist Jr. High, Larry had the advantage of knowing students from Pleasant View, Plain City, and Lomond View elementary schools. He always had lots of friends. At Wahlquist, Larry particularly enjoyed his art and sculpture classes.

Larry was ordained a Deacon, a Teacher and then a Priest in the LDS Harrisville Ward. He participated in quorum and scouting activities. In 1963, Boyd Crowther taught the scouts hunting and survival skills, and helped them prepare to pass the Utah State Survival and Hunter Safety Course. Larry was an enthusiastic scouter, and liked learning hunting and camping skills.

One highlight of Larry's scouting experiences was a wilderness canoe trip that the Harrisville scouts went on in July, 1967. The group drove to Minnesota. Once there, they skimmed and paddled through the lakes, carrying their canoes whenever they needed to go cross country

from one lake to another. Traveling through the wilderness areas of Minnesota by canoe was an unforgettable experience.

Larry graduated from Weber High School and the LDS Seminary in 1968. He attended Utah State University for a year, but did not focus on his studies. When Larry turned nineteen, he was drafted by the Army. He reported to Fort Lewis Washington for basic training on 15 April 1970. He was then sent to Augusta, Georgia to be trained as a heavy vehicle driver. Before leaving for Vietnam on 14 December 1970, Larry went to Washington, D.C. to spend a few days with LeAnn, who was attending George Washington University.

In Vietnam, Larry drove trucks and tanks in various convoys. Children would rush out to greet them as they passed, usually begging for gum or candy. Larry was fond of children and found it troubling that the U.S. soldiers had to be wary of them, as children were sometimes used to trigger booby traps or create diversions. Larry saw several of his close friends killed. Larry then worked as a dispatcher in the central highlands with the 545th Transportation Company.

Although he never complained, Larry's last assignment in Vietnam was lonely and nerve wracking. He was stationed at a communications base approximately half way between Quin-nhom and Pleiku, on a 100-mile stretch of road in a contested area. The road crested two mountain passes. Sections of the road were too narrow for two way traffic. Larry's job was to direct traffic so convoys did not meet, and to send up gunships to provide cover when the convoys called for help. He lived alone in a trailer that housed the communications equipment. Occasionally he ate a meal with a nearby construction crew. The rest of the Army had been pulled back. A safe in the trailer contained important papers and codes. Larry's instructions were to blow up the safe if his position was overrun by the Viet Cong. As sociable as Larry was, it was no doubt challenging to be so isolated. The nights, particularly, must have been long and harrowing with no distractions and with no one else there to share his fears and concerns. When he finished his tour of duty, Larry was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal.

Larry returned from Vietnam in December 1971. He had a hard time adjusting to life as a civilian. For the next few years, he was in and out of college, sometimes living at home, sometimes in an apartment, doing odd jobs, and uncertain what he wanted to do with his life. He continued to be a thoughtful, caring person with many friends, but he wanted to put the past behind him.

In the year before he died, Larry sought out counseling and was trying to overcome habits he had picked up in Vietnam, like smoking. He began attending church with his girlfriend. He wanted to go back to school, and felt like he had finally begun to straighten his life out. He registered at the University of Utah and had a job lined up at the University Hospital. Until school started, Larry worked a summer job with a friend, Dean DeVries, doing black top repairs.

On 15 September 1976, two young men whom Larry had befriended while living in Salt Lake showed up in Ogden. They were eighteen years old and were hitchhiking to South

Dakota to see one's father. Since Larry had the day off, they convinced him to drive them part way. Larry drove Ava's Volkswagon, since he was in the middle of repairing it for her. In the repair process, he had unbolted the front seats, which were still unfastened.

Larry let one of the young men drive, but in the mountains near Shoshone, Idaho, the driver started fooling around with the steering wheel, thinking it was funny to zig zag across the road. The young man in the back seat of the car reported that Larry told the driver to stop messing around. Just then a car rounded a bend of the road. It was headed straight toward them. Larry grabbed the steering wheel just in time to avoid a head on collision. The driver over corrected and lost control of the car. The Volkswagon veered off a steep embankment tumbling end over end. Larry was wearing a seat belt, but his seat was ejected. As it landed, his head struck a large rock.

Larry was taken to a hospital in Jerome, Idaho, and from there to St. Alphonsus Hospital in Boise, Idaho, which was better equipped to treat head injuries. Larry had a closed head injury with massive trauma to the brain stem. Somehow the two young men were not thrown from the car and neither was hurt. As soon as Eleanor got the call, she and Ava rushed to Boise. Virgil, was not at home, but followed later that night. During the coming days, Eleanor scarcely left Larry's side. He was in a coma and never recovered consciousness. After eleven days on life support, his heart gave out. He died on 26 September 1976 and was buried in the Aultorest Memorial Park Cemetery in Ogden, Utah. He was 26 years old.

SOURCE:

Family Records.

Painter, Ave. Recollections.

Painter, Eleanor C. Recollections.

Painter, Frank. Recollections.

Taylor, Lenore. Recollections.

Wheeler, LeAnn Painter. Recollections.

545th Transportation Company	Painter, Ava
Crowther, Albert Lawrence	Painter, Eleanor Crowther
Crowther, Boyd	Painter, Frank
Crowther, Ellen	Painter, Kirt
DeVries, Dean	Painter, Laurence Virgil
Edwards, Lynn	Painter, LeAnn
Meritorious Service Medal	Painter, Trudy
Mortensen, Homer	Shurtleff, Bill
Nebeker, Jerel	Shurtleff, Davy