

## About the Program - Interviews - Historian Will Bagley interviewed by Ken Verdoia

**Ken:** Let's pick a place to begin. 1846, the dawn it is such a fascinating time. There's a phrase that's on the list of many Americans, and especially one American in particular, James K. Polk. The phrase is Manifest Destiny. What does that mean to you?

**Will:** In 1846 the American West is up for grabs, and it's apparent to powerful Americans in the East that the chance to make a continental nation is within reach. The term that evokes this feeling, an era, is coined in a meeting in July of 1846. It's probably coined by a woman whose maiden name is Jane Storm, and the phrase is manifest destiny. The philosophy is that it is America's God-given destiny to fill up not just the eastern United States but also the entire North American Continent. In its extreme versions it sees the American empire extending all the way to China. But it's an expansive, huge view of the nation's future and role. What we need to remember is in 1846 everything is up for grabs. Texas has just been admitted as a state. Texas provided a model to many of the adventurers who dreamed of founding their own empire in the West. Sam Houston had played what was called the "Texas game," where American promoters would find an attractive Mexican province, recruit Americans to go and settle there, and once they held the balance of power, liberate the territory and concur the Mexican state or province and then either build a personal empire or integrate into the United States. Sam Houston had done this brilliantly and offered a model for ambitious adventurers like John C. Fremont, Samuel Brannen, Lance W. Hastings.

**Ken:** Manifest destiny seems clear, but there are roadblocks that exist in 1846. This is not something that the nation can do on a whim. What are the roadblocks as you perceive them?

**Will:** It's interesting because from where we sit today it seems inevitable that America would span the continent, but it didn't look like that before the 1840s. Thomas Jefferson said the continent is simply too big to support democratic republics and he envisions a series of small states across the continent. But a technological revolution happens in the 1820s and 30s with the building of railroads and the invention of the telegraph. That shrinks the size of the country and people begin to see that you can build a democratic republic that would extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The roadblocks to that, though, are substantial. America was really not a world power. World powers were Britain, the dominating power, France, Germany was emerging, but Europeans held American models and armies in contempt. The Duke of Wellington predicted that the Mexican army in the Mexican War would easily destroy whatever forces America could send against them. Also you had the force of the British Navy and Americans remembered the revolution and the War of 1812, and they did not remember it fondly. A war against England would have had tremendous popular support, but it would have been politically a disaster because America's navy was a tenth the size of the British and America's world power lay almost a century in the future. So the picture in 1846 is everything is up for grabs. It takes a man of tremendous talent and vision to see that opportunity, and that man is President James K. Polk.

**Ken:** Tell me about Polk because his reputation has taken a beating over time, people reinterpreting the justness of the war with Mexico. As we sit in his version of the Oval Office in 1846, what does he view as the mandate for his nation? What does he view his sacred duty as being?

**Will:** James K. Polk came out of the Democratic tradition that Thomas Jefferson had founded and that Andrew Jackson perfected. What people who denigrate Polk as a ruthless conqueror forget is that he was also a very idealistic man. A man with a tremendous sense of honor and a sense of justice. Polk realized that the opportunities that lay before him might not ever be repeated, and that if America lost

the opportunity to either purchase or otherwise acquire New Mexico and California, it might easily fall into the hands of Great Britain, which had a substantial presence on the West Coast in Oregon. on and that the sacrifices that these men and woman made produced the benefits of liberty and prosperity that we enjoy. It's hard to recognize the contribution that the Mormon Battalion made to the Mormon West. They became leaders of Mormon colonizing experiments. They brought a certain level of military experience that the Mormons used in their wars with the Indians, but most importantly they learned about western survival. From New Mexico they brought irrigation techniques. From California they brought wheat that had been in acclimatized to the west. They brought a variety of crops back, but mostly they brought back the discipline and skills that made them a new kind of American, the Mormon frontiersman, someone who could take a sack of beef jerky and set out from Salt Lake and make it all the way back to the Missouri River, or someone who could set out in the middle of winter and found the first settlements in southern Utah, people of tremendous character and accomplishments. One thing I love about the Mormon Battalion is, it's the story of ordinary people and they are the ones who deserve the credit for building the society we have today.

He was just the man to seize that opportunity. Polk believed that American democracy and the American republic a model, was the most enlightened form of government on the planet, and he believed that by acquiring the northern providences of Mexico he would extend the blessings of liberty and freedom to the Mexican people. He proceeded in this somewhat idealistic goal fairly ruthlessly and very cleverly. He first of all tried to purchase the province of New Mexico and California. He really wanted California because even then it was recognized that the Port of San Francisco would be the gateway to the Orient, and the key to controlling the Pacific Ocean. Mexico was in political turmoil. It had been ruled by a series of military units and Mexico was simply too proud to surrender territory to the United States, even though it was often obvious that if America couldn't purchase the land, they would conquer it. But to his credit, Polk tried to avoid a war. Once he thought he had no alternatives, he provoked a war.

It's often forgotten that he sent an American commodore, Robert Stockton, to Texas and Stockton offered to hire the Texas militia to launch a war against Mexico, which inevitably would have provoked a war with the United States. After Texas becomes a state, which Mexico considers an act of war, Polk sends an American army in to contested land between the north of the Rio Grand River. A patrol sent out by General Zachary Taylor is attacked by a Mexican Calvary unit, which cannot resist the bait, and Polk in the meantime has sent them war message to Congress. His justification for war with Mexico is that they owe the United States money. They haven't paid their debts. It was a preposterous reason to go to war, and just before he submitted that declaration of war, word came that American blood had been shed on the Rio Grand, and the nation united behind Polk and the conquest of the American West.

Polk is playing a very dangerous political game. He is trying to do several things at once: acquire Oregon territory, which is jointly occupied with Great Britain; and acquire the American southwest, which is Mexican territory. Great Britain is the most powerful country in the world, has a huge navy, and predetermined to extend the reign of the British Empire. They are moderately interested in Oregon. They have some financial interests there, but it is more about honor. Giving up Oregon to the Americans seems like it is throwing away an opportunity for Great Britain. Polk, in his continental ambitions, is gambling that he can cut a deal with the English and then fight a war with Mexico if necessary and conquer the Southwest. But he must have awakened in the White House sometimes late at night with the notion or fear that he'd have a war with both Mexico and Great Britain on his hands, which probably would have been disastrous for the United States.

Ken: We have your manifest destiny. We have this opening of the American West that many are dreaming it up and then right on the edge of the United States, in fact in the United States, is a group of co-religionists who've suffered mightily over the past couple of years. They are known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We'll call them the Mormons. Help me understand, help the average audience understand the plight of the Mormons in this late spring, early summer of 1846. What is their lot?

Will: As Polk is contemplating the lay of the land in 1846, on the far American frontier he's got a big problem. Ten to 12,000 religious refugees, who have been driven from their homes in Illinois, who feel that they have been betrayed by their country, who intend to go to Mexico, conquer part of the territory and found their own independent state. Now you need to realize that in 1846 there are between 6,000 and 12,000 European descended people in California. There are less than 10,000 people in Oregon, so 10,000 souls going west is going to have a tremendous impact, no matter where they wind up. The Mormon's themselves had endured a tremendous amount of conflict and suffering in the 16 years that they've been a religion because of their singular ways, their unique society, which in many ways was organized in direct contradiction of Jacksonian democratic principles. They had run into political conflicts and even religious civil war in Missouri and Illinois. In 1844 their beloved prophet, Joseph Smith, had been murdered by a mob. They had tried to keep their kingdom at Nauvoo as their home, but over the next two years again this conflict degenerates into a religious civil war. The remarkable man who has come forward to lead the Latter Day Saints, Brigham Young, decides that there is no more hope for the Mormon church in America and they have to strike out, find a place that is remote, and where they can build Zion, their kingdom.

Ken: Now Brigham Young. I'm glad you brought him in because here is a man who, if anyone would take a quick glance they'd say the man has no cards to play. His people are driven; they are on the run, in effect. They are disorganized. They've lost their property, and yet Brigham Young approaches this in his own unique manner. Let's begin, just as you were talking about the plight of the Mormons, the situation they found themselves in a desperate way.

Will: By the spring of 1846, the Mormons have fled Illinois under threat of indictment of their leaders and are struggling across Iowa territory to reach the American frontier on the Missouri River. It's disorganized, chaotic, they've converted everything they own into teams and wagons and cattle, and in many ways it is a horrific trek of religious refugees. One of the great benefits that the Latter Day Saints have is that they have a brilliant and determined and dedicated leader, who is Brigham Young, and he manages to help organize and get this huge number of people across through the mud of Iowa. But the Mormons themselves are fairly demoralized. They've been driven from their homes in Illinois just as they had been driven from Missouri. They feel anger and rejection at the United States. They are at a tremendous disadvantage. They have no cash and virtually no political influence. They do, however, have an amazing faith and a belief that God is with them.

Ken: Brigham Young, we've alluded to him now a couple of times. He's really fighting in many respects almost a rear guard action. As he leads his people westward, he's still turning his face back to the East, and he's wondering and seeking any opportunity that might present itself for the Federal Government.

Will: One of Brigham Young's great challenges is he has no money. The Mormon Church is flat broke and as he often did, he followed Joseph Smith's example and he appealed to the United States government. He sent agents back to Washington D.C. to ask the government to hire the Mormons to build forts along the Oregon Trail. It's a desperate gamble in many ways because Young doesn't have

much confidence that the United States government will help him out. But interestingly, politically, the Mormons claimed they had helped elect Polk, and in some ways they have something of a claim. The election of 1844 came down to the state of New York and Polk won it by a razor thin majority. If you would have subtracted the Mormon block vote, arguably, Henry Clay would have become president. Whether Polk was aware of this or gave any credence to it is beyond knowing, and he probably didn't consider he owed anything to the Mormons. But Polk was a humanitarian. His wife had helped sponsor relief, charity-raising operations to help the Mormon immigrants. He also faced a tremendous political problem because 10,000 Americans on the frontier, poised to go in the West, could upset the balance of power from Oregon to California.

Ken: That's good. I want to kind of skip forward a little bit and look at a couple of individuals. First of all one of the people that Young identifies as the President of the Eastern States Mission and an unofficial emissary to Washington, Jessie D. Little. Tell me about this man. Why does he become significant?

Will: It's interesting that in our view of Mormon history we tend to take what people in the 19th century would call "the big fish" approach, and we give an awful lot of credit to the top leaders but ignore the fact that the Mormon movement contained an astonishing body of talented men and women who would have been brilliant managers in almost any situation. Among the forgotten heroes who essentially ensured the survival and success of the Mormon Church was a young Vermonter named Jessie Carter Little. He's a brilliant young man, pretty well politically connected, and he's given the job of President of the Eastern Mission, which means essentially that he's President of the Mormon church of everything east of the Mississippi River.

He's given a very difficult assignment by Brigham Young. "Get help from the government. Get some cash so that the Mormons can leave the United States." Carter goes to Washington D.C. recruiting political allies along the way, including an influential federal judge in Pennsylvania named Cane and his son Thomas L. Cane. They witness sheaf of letters of recommendation from the governor of Vermont and other powerful Democrats. Carter Little, with a bundle of letters of recommendation from politically influential Democrats, goes to Washington D.C. and begins lobbying to see the president. He spends two weeks getting absolutely no place and he's immensely frustrated when a young Philadelphian named Thomas L. Cane comes to Washington to help the Mormons. Cane is from a powerful political family in Pennsylvania and understands how politics work, and after a conversation with Cane, Jessie C. Little sits down and writes a letter to the president. And in this letter he describes the plight of the Mormon people and he emphasizes their devotion to America. But he says, "If our country will not help us, we will turn elsewhere."

He makes it very clear that elsewhere is across the Atlantic Ocean in the British Empire. This is a threat that immediately gets the attention of the President of the United States. The next day Jessie Little is meeting with the President.

Ken: Very, very well stated. Who comes up with this concept of forming a group of Mormons into a military unit? Did it just evolve out of this chance meeting?

Will: There are a lot of myths about the creation of the Mormon Battalion. One is that James K. Polk was desperately in need of soldiers, which is ridiculous because Polk had more volunteers than he could possibly use. He had 50,000 men in Pennsylvania who wanted to go to war and the army had no place for them. What Polk had was a political situation on his hands. He wanted to secure the political loyalty of the Mormons. He also, I believe, felt some sympathy for them, and felt that if the

government could provide a legitimate form of aid, it would be an act of justice and humanity. So he comes up with the idea of enlisting a battalion in the army of the West composed exclusively of Mormons who would provide the L.D.S. Church with desperately needed cash and would essentially get the government to pay to send 500 of their best young men across the plains to California. It's an astute, brilliant political maneuver because he is not only able to get foot soldiers to march to Mexico and California out of the deal, but he wins the political loyalty of the Mormons and cancels the threat that they'd become a problem in the conquest of California or Oregon.

Ken: Does he also serve a political need by showing a sign of keeping an eye on the Mormons as well to those who might owe them in greater significance?

Will: Well it is interesting because we tend to forget that Polk was taking a very politically unpopular move. He was providing help and comfort to a very unpopular religious minority. Polk was taking a political gamble when he authorized this creation of the Mormon Battalion. Mormons are not popular on the American frontier. In Missouri they are absolutely anathema. They are despised, and there's quite a bit of protest that comes out of the army itself. And as a condition of the enlistment he directs General Steven Kearney, commander of the army of the west, to make sure that no more than a third of his force going to California consists of Mormons because politicians and military authorities are fearful that if they march an army of exclusively Mormons to California their loyalty would be to Mormonism before the United States, and if they conquered California, they might not give it back.

Ken: Very well stated. Moving forward a little bit. The plan is put a foot, messages are dispensed to Kearney, and Kearney authorizes a captain, James Allen, and begins the process of recruiting this battalion. Allan's planning that he get there before word really reaches the Mormon people that this will be happening. And Allan appears at Mount Pisgah and says, "Here I am. I'm on a recruiting drive." What is the reaction of these unsuspecting Latter Day Saints to the arrival of the American military saying "We're the army, we're here to help."

Will: When Captain James Allen of the first dragoons shows up at the Mormon refugee camp at Mount Pisgah in today's Iowa, the Mormons are immediately suspicious. They suspect that Allen has come to arrest Brigham Young who's under a federal indictment for counterfeiting. Allen asks a young Mormon named Henry Bigler if he can tell him where Brigham Young is. Bigler knows where Brigham Young is, but says, "I don't have a clue where Brigham Young is." Word gets back to Young, Young realizes that rather than seeking to arrest him they have come to provide the help that he has asked for and meets with Colonel Allen. Young realizes that the arrival of Captain Allen is a godsend. He meets with Allen, agrees to recruit a battalion of 500 men and he accompanies Allen through the Mormon camps giving rousing speeches and directing the people to enlist. It is interesting that in their diaries and memoirs many of these soldiers make clear that they would not have enlisted in the United States under any other circumstances. They felt betrayed. They felt their country had left them behind, and the notion of helping their country to fight a war seemed preposterous, but Brigham Young recognized that this presented an enormous opportunity to the L.D.S. Church. He said that this thing is from God. He viewed it as a blessing from the Lord to help the Mormons make this incredible exodus to the American West.

Ken: So in a very real sense these men felt they were being called to a church mission.

Will: It is interesting that the battalion was being called on a mission and they were being given a religious assignment. Many of the teenagers jumped at the chance. They were eager to set out on an adventure in the West, but it also took a lot of older married men who had to leave their families

behind, who made a tremendous sacrifice to both their church and their country. But their first loyalties at this point, because of their experiences, were to their church. Without direct orders from Brigham Young, James Allen probably would have left the Mormon camps with 12 to 15 men.

Ken: You talk about ...

Will: Typically Brigham Young is a very cagey negotiator, and when he meets Allen, he lays down some conditions. One of them is that the Mormons will elect their own officers. In fact, he appoints the officers. American militia units almost universally elected their officers. Brigham Young lets them elect the non-commissioned officers, sergeants, and corporals, but he appoints the captains. He makes clear that if something happens that the command will go to those officers. He sets the officers apart, not only as military figures, but also as religious authorities.

The second condition that Young sets is that the men will be allowed to take their families with them. American military units were generally accompanied by laundresses, five to a company, five to 100 men in theory. A number of Mormon women are enlisted as laundresses and essentially take an official position. But beyond those 25 official laundresses, are another 125 to 150 men, women, and children. In many ways the battalion becomes unique because it's this enormous caravan, including a large number of families. Occasionally American military units, soldiers, or officers would take along their wives, but Jefferson Hunt is probably the only man in American history who took two wives on a military expedition.

Ken: Let me just jog your memory. The third condition, which Young is essential, is the ability of the Mormons that they stayed to live on Indian lands.

Will: The third condition addresses a major problem that Brigham Young faces, which is where is he going to stay. The Mormons are squatting on government land in Iowa and they are fearful that being on the same side of the river as Missouri will lead to conflict. Young gets Captain Allen to authorize the Mormons to move across the Missouri River and form an encampment at what is called Winters Quarters in the Potawatomi Nation. Captain Allen, of course, has no authority whatsoever to cut such a deal, but it gives the Mormons tremendous authority and they are later, over the protest of the Indian agents, able to essentially clear it with the federal government. So Young comes up with a pretty good deal. He's got the cash of the soldiers, he's got 500 men and their families heading west at government expense, he's got a safe place where he can take the Latter Day Saints and prepare for the larger emigration, and he's won some political cover.

Ken: Confusion exists there among the men who enlist in the battalion, among many Latter Day Saints, about what the destination is in the summer of 1846. I mean the battalion thinks we're marching to California because that is the destination. Help me understand this confusion about what is the destination and how it impacts them.

Will: There was a huge amount of confusion about where the Mormons were going, and some of it was intentional. The Mormons had announced in January of 1845 that they were going to go to California. Now, we tend to forget that in 1846 California reached from the Pacific Coast to the crest of the Rocky Mountains and included everything south of the 46 parallel, the Oregon border. A huge amount of land out of which five or six states were eventually carved. So going to California was a pretty general term. It appears that by August of 1845, Brigham Young, who had been industriously reading the reports of John C. Fremont, had been interviewing every mountain man who came

through the Mormon settlements. He had identified a secure isolated place to settle, the Great Basin, specifically the Salt Lake Valley. But he had already dispatched 230 Mormons to go to California by ship. But typically he played his cards pretty close to the vest and he didn't even let the leader of those sea-going Mormons know his ultimate plan. When Samuel Brannon set out for California in the ship Brooklyn with a large Mormon colony, he thought that Brigham Young intended to go all the way to the coast and settle in California.

Young is very nervous about being prevented from going west or, one thing we tend to forget when the Mormons head west is they are not heading out into American territory, they are violating international law, marching into a sovereign nation and seizing territory, which is exactly their plan. But it is a politically dangerous act. Young recognizes almost immediately when the Mexican War breaks out that the land will not belong to Mexico very long. He begins negotiations with the federal government to establish a territory for the Mormons in the Great Basin. But there is this huge confusion remaining over where are the Mormons going to go. And Brigham Young himself really doesn't decide. There is a tremendous mythology that Brigham Young has seen the Salt Lake Valley in a vision and when he finally gets here in 1847, he recognizes that this is the place. But, in fact, Brigham Young was going to look at the territory. He needed to see what was out here, and even when they settled in 1847, the Mormons weren't sure they could actually survive in the Great Basin.

Ken: That's good, that's sufficient. Five hundred men of the battalion and their camp followers muster together, sign in Council Bluff, and they begin to march under the leadership of Captain Allen. I'm stuck by the point of these men marching off to war because many times, over the centuries men have marched off to war, but they are marching away from the hometowns. They are not marching away from refugee camps, and that's really what they are doing. They are marching in service to a nation that turned its back on, they believe, it's Hunt. Help me better understand the importance of this leave taking place.

Will: When men leave families and go to war, it is always a very moving event. But there are some singular aspects to the Mormons departure from Council Bluff in 1846. Generally when American soldiers march to war, they were leaving behind family, with their family established. When the Mormons left Council Bluff in 1846, they were leaving their families in what they considered a barren wilderness, surrounded by savage tribes of Indians facing a Midwestern winter. They went with Brigham Young's promise that he would take care of their families, and that was basically all the security they had. After a large ball celebration, it's typical of the Latter Day Saints to have a big celebration before they attempt something very difficult. The men march off to that classic tune, "The Girl I Left Behind Me." As the women watch their sons and husbands leave they recognize that they may never see them again. The men have tremendous anxiety that they're leaving their people to the mercy of the Indians and the Missourians. There are any number of powerful accounts of the separation of fathers and their children, husbands and wives, sons and daughters with their parents.

Ken: Well I can recall correspondence in which those left behind do not want their brother to go, actually do not see the logic or purpose or reason to go.

Will: These people make any number of sacrifices and during this heart-rending separation one woman in particular whose name is Margaret Scott, whose brother has promised to take her west. James Scott enlists as a corporal in the battalion and promises that he'll come out for his sister Margaret. It's the unknown and the unknowable that makes these separations so poignant. These men had a pretty good idea that they were going to march 2000 miles, many of them had never seen an ocean before, and many of them had never been away from their families. They had grown up in a

very tight family environment. To leave behind your wife and children was tremendously bothersome to many of these men and it haunted them throughout their entire march. It was true, many of these goodbyes were last goodbyes because men died, one out of ten Latter Day Saints died at Winter Quarters in the winter of 1846, 1847. It was a tremendously powerful and moving separation.

Ken: Let's put them on the march and recognize that their own mortality is driven home within it. A day or two after their departure from Council Bluff, they experienced their first death and it will not be an uncommon experience. Which really drives home to me the hallowing nature of just trying to survive this march. I hope the average person can understand the difficulty of being on foot in that setting.

Will: Well one reason the Mormon Battalion was attractive to the American military is that they enlisted as infantrymen. There were plenty of young Americans who wanted to enlist in the cavalry, but there weren't that many who wanted to enlist, to walk, 1200 miles to Santa Fe and then another 1200 to the Pacific Ocean. A large American militia unit on the march was quite a spectacle. When they leave Council Bluff, they leave without any supplies. They've left all the food and most of the clothing behind with their families. So it's not so much a military unit as a huge mob that is marching down the Missouri River to Fort Leavenworth, both where they will be equipped and given some preliminary training and tents. There are hilarious stories about the looting that goes on and people pretending to be American army officers. It's both a moving and hilarious spectacle. But very quickly the realities of what they face set in. One of the civilian men accompanying the battalion dies on one of the first days of the march. They begin to get sick because of their depleted condition. They deal with the heat, and they realize that they face an enormous challenge.

Ken: I'm going to skip through Leavenworth very quickly because I want to pick up the battalion on the march. They have been out getting the mules and they depart and at the outset their departure from Leavenworth seems to be eminent because now Colonel of Volunteers, James Allen, is not with them. In a matter of days they get the word, well actually it takes longer, the word finally catches them that Colonel Allen will not be coming, that Colonel Allen is in fact dead now. This is a significant lightening bolt of information. What does it mean?

Will: Captain Allen is something of a puzzle. He was with the first dragoons, a crack military outfit. He'd been a West Pointer. He was a soldier's soldier. We really don't know why the Mormons and Allen get along so well. Allen is a professional soldier, long experienced, but he also has got some character flaws. He seems to have been an alcoholic. He was not assigned to command the Mormon Battalion because General Kearney considered him essential to the professional soldiers he was going to lead to New Mexico, but he seems to have been a very competent officer, and he handled the task he was assigned very well. The troops fall in love with him. It's often hard to figure out why, but when they get to Fort Leavenworth, Allen falls sick and they begin sending out companies to get ahead on the march hoping that Allen will recover and catch up with them. It's not clear what kills Allen, it's probably cholera or some frontier disease, but word comes that he is dead. The troops are crushed. The man that they have felt had made promises, a man of his word, was gone. It opens up this huge conflict about who's going to take command. This conflict is between the Mormon militia officers who are really just the most amateur military people in the world, and a few West Pointers, many of them right out of the Point with little practical experience. But ultimately the Mormon militia leaders defer to the professional soldiers, probably because none of the Mormon militia leaders could figure out how to get paid. It's unfortunate that after the excellent relations that the Mormons have with Captain Allen that those relations pretty much end until they get to Santa Fe. The younger officers, many of whom become distinguished Civil War generals, do not get along well with the Mormons. They have a

tough task. American professional soldiers did not like militia men from the get go. George Washington hated dealing with the militia and it was his attitude that carried through to the Mexican War. Part of the problem was that they were dealing with frontier Americans, individuals, men who did not cotton up to being disciplined, and military discipline was pretty tough in the old army. The officers demanded absolute devotion to duty and adherence to the rules. Being frontiersmen, the young Mormon soldiers did not take well to this kind of discipline.

Ken: It ultimately produces a substantial dissension in the ranks. Lieutenant Andrew Jackson Smith becomes the subject of great grumbling in the diaries and journals among the men, which is exacerbated when another figure rides into camp, John Doyle Lee.

Will: One of the leading reasons that Brigham Young agrees to enlist the battalion is the cash. He gets the clothing allowance that is issued at Fort Leavenworth. It delivers as much as \$21,000 to the L.D.S. Church, which is flat broke, and so this pay is essential. The battalion will also be paid when it gets to Santa Fe. So Young selects a couple of men who are trustworthy, capable men who will go to Santa Fe, collect that money and bring it back to Winter Quarters. One of them is Howard Egan, who later becomes a famous Mormon frontiersman and Pony Express agent. The other is one of the most fascinating characters of Mormon history, John Doyle Lee. Lee is sent by Young to get the money. He arrives with the battalion as they are just getting used to the command of Andrew Jackson Smith, a very young inexperienced army officer who does not get along well with the troops. Typically, John D. Lee gets right in the middle of this bitter political controversy. The controversy is who will command the battalion?

Arguably, according to Brigham Young's arrangements, the command should have gone to Captain Jefferson Hunt, the most senior Mormon officer. But the militia captains themselves recognize that they don't have the experience. They don't have the professional training it's going to take to get the force this large safely across the West, and they are not all that keen to take over the command, but Lee sees things differently.

One of the key problems that exist in the conflicts in the battalion itself, is the conflict between the religious authorities and the military authorities. Brigham Young has appointed a very contentious man named Levi Hancock, the only general authority to enlist in the battalion, to be the spiritual leader of the battalion. Hancock is, in fact, a private, a fifer, a musician with absolutely no rank, but as the spiritual authority, a man with tremendous power. Hancock does not get along with others, especially the Mormon militia officers. As the battalion was preparing to leave Council Bluff, Brigham Young told the officers to be fathers to their men. But at the same time he appointed a distant relative of John Hancock, a devout Mormon named Levi Hancock, to be the battalion spiritual leader. Now Hancock was actually a private, a musician, a fifer with no military authority what so ever. Because of his religious office, he's the only general authority to accompany the Mormon Battalion. He holds tremendous influence and power, and the battalion fairly quickly divides its loyalties between the men who look to Levi Hancock for leadership and the men who look to the militia captains as their leaders. This conflict persists all the way through the battalion's enlistment.

Now this conflict is exacerbated with the arrival on the march to Santa Fe of one of the most remarkable of all Mormon frontiersmen, John Doyle Lee. Lee as was his task, came with the authority to collect the pay of the battalion in Santa Fe, but he also felt that he, as a senior religious authority in the Mormon Church, could call a lot of shots. He sided with Levi Hancock and further divides the battalion between its military officers and its religious leaders. Lee, who has a remarkable ability to

stir up trouble, caused a huge dissention. In many ways he appears to be trying to set up a crisis so that the question will come down to forcing the militia leaders to mutiny and replace the regular army offices.

Lee pushes it right to the brink, but apparently realizes that if he foments this rebellion, he'll be unable to collect the pay in Santa Fe, and he pulls in his horns almost at the last moment.

Ken: Money being an overriding consideration.

Will: Oh, money is number one. But Lee, for all his trouble making, leaves a magnificent contribution. His diary of the march to Santa Fe is one of the best documents we have on the American West. It tells us how a militia unit marches, how its day is organized. We learn that the bands strike up the fife and drums to spur the men along as they make these large arduous marches. We see how, rather than being a tight military unit, the Mormon Battalion resembles a wagon train extending over a mile or two. We see the extraordinary characters who make up this expedition, and we get a pretty clear picture of how influential the wives are, how important it is that they protect these families.

Ken: Did that create some dissention as well because when you have a military unit traveling some men have the aid and comfort and presence of their wives while others have been forced to leave their families behind?

Will: Well, the battalion was not exactly a crack military outfit, and it didn't help that it had so many women and children, and even old men, along. So when the battalion gets to the Arkansas River, Lieutenant Smith decides that he has got to shed some of these civilians and he assigns one of the Mormon captains to lead a substantial number of the woman and children to winter at what is today Pueblo, Colorado. This is the first step of turning the battalion into a practical military force.

Ken: It's also a controversial issue. It must produce great conflict among the members.

Will: The decision to send the woman and children to Pueblo is not popular. First of all because of the personal sacrifices, but even more because Brigham Young had issued a directive, which was, "Do not split up the battalion. Keep it as one unit." Before they are even a quarter of the way on their march, they are divided up, so that sets up a basic conflict. Practically by that time it's pretty clear that the officers recognize that they simply can't keep this enormous parade going unless they willow out the people who aren't physically fit, the young children, who simply can't make the march, and the older people, some of whom have died because of the hardship of the trek.

It's interesting to contemplate who was assigned and who was selected to become the Mormon Battalion. In many ways Brigham Young did not send his best men with the Mormon Battalion. A number of the men who were assigned to go are troublemakers. They are not loyal to Brigham Young, but the vast majority of them are teenagers, and imagine any society that could say good-bye to all of its teenagers for a year or two. I'm sure that the possibility was simply too tempting, and some of them are real characters like Abner Blackburn, who had been as he said "chief cook and bottle washer and a teamster for Brigham Young." They were also not probably very reliable.

Blackburn tells a great story about Brigham Young. Blackburn's driving one of Young's wagons through Iowa. He gets to the bottom of a hill and he's driving the oxen along and notices that all of a

sudden they pick up and seem to be moving along quite well, and he gets to the top of the hill where Brigham Young is standing overseeing the immigration. Young turns to Blackburn and says, "Where is your wagon?" The wagon has become detached at the bottom of the hill and Blackburn has driven up a team of oxen pulling nothing. But he makes a very insightful comment on Brigham Young. Nothing escaped his attention. It's that command of detail, that insight into everything that was going on, that is one of Young's great talents as a leader.

Ken: You talked as if the Arkansas River, A. J. Smith makes the first determination the women have to go, the children have to go, and some of the people that are most seriously ill have to go. So this brings up another one of the colorful characters and most controversial, the man who was sitting in judgment of who is sick and who is not sick. The rather notorious Dr. Death, Dr. Sanderson. Why is it oil and water between the battalion and this man of medicine from the ...

Will: Like any great story the Mormon Battalion has its villain, and it is Dr. George Sanderson, a slave owner from Missouri who is the surgeon of the battalion and in charge of the men's health. The man they have to go to if they are sick and they want to ride in the wagon instead of marching for a while. The man who dictates the medicines they'll take. Sanderson doesn't seem to have been a real charming character, but he is up against a very hard situation. There were basically two schools of medicine in the 19th century. One was the one the Mormons favored, the Tomsonian model of medicine, which was largely herbal healing, natural ways. The other was the more professional medicine, which relied on medicines that we know today are not very effective and sometimes poisonous. But Sanderson comes out of a professional medical community. He acts very much as probably any surgeon would in the old army, but it puts him at direct odds with the Mormons who insist that he's continually forcing Calomel, which is largely mercury, down their throats and poisoning them. There are several charges that Sanderson hates the Mormons so much that he is trying to poison all of his charges. In fact, Sanderson was probably doing his duty, doing about as good a job as he could, but again and again in the Mormon journals point to him as a villain with everything but horns.

Ken: We talked about this first lead taking, and again now we have the second great violation of the agreement with Brigham Young. First that the Mormons would lead themselves if Allen should fall; secondly we have the notion that they would not be divided, but the division is going on. This leads us to Santa Fe, and there is another great change and a new figure arrives on the scene. Lieutenant A. J. Smith stays with the battalion but he's no longer in charge. There is a new commanding officer, Phillip St. George Cooke. Tell me about this man.

Will: It's interesting but when word reaches Washington that Allen is dead, the army appoints another man to take command, and he is completely forgotten because he can't catch up with the battalion. General Kearney, who has left Santa Fe behind and is marching to California, gets word of Allen's death and knows that he's got to send a man who can meet one of the most difficult challenges any American military officer will face in the West and he picks a man of incredible ability and character, Phillip St. George Cooke.

Cooke is a Virginian. He has been in the army since he was a teenager. He has tremendous experience on the western frontier. He's a member of the elite first dragoons. He's also six feet four inches tall, the tallest man in the battalion, and movie star good looking. He is an officer's officer. He's also a harsh disciplinarian and given to profanity. Cooke did not take lightly to insubordination or failure, and he often expressed his displeasure by swearing a lot, and that tended to horrify many of his Mormon charges, but I'm pretty sure that in all their time they got used to it.

Ken: So, Cooke, the commanding officer, meets the battalion as it kind of straggles in to Santa Fe for it's marshaling to head off on the journey to California. What is Colonel Cooke's first take, as he takes the measure of his new charges?

Will: What Phillip St. George Cooke saw when he got to Santa Fe must have been heartbreaking. It's a fairly disorganized, somewhat demoralized group of men who he says have been recruited entirely too much from young boys and older men, burdened down with their families, and already in bad shape from their experiences as religious refugees. So typically Phillip St. George Cooke sets out to make the best of it. He orders most of the remaining women and children north to Pueblo, Colorado, where there is a trapper's fort and selects about 335 men who are in good enough shape to make the march. To willow out the battalion, Cooke sends two detachments, one from Santa Fe and one from the Rio Grande to get rid of the children, woman, and old men and sick, who simply aren't physically capable of making the march. This has tremendous consequences because it separates families and many of the men are outraged. But to Cooke's credit, some of the husbands, when they appeal to him, he allows them to go and accompany their families. They are often called the sick detachments, but in fact it was a more motley crew. They weren't all sick, but they certainly weren't prime candidates to march to California.

Ken: Let's talk about the nature of the march. Because as they leave Santa Fe, although this experience is difficult stretches of the trip through Santa Fe, when they leave Santa Fe, this truly becomes an arduous journey, days, two, three, sometimes four days without water. How can this comfortable 21st century audience can understand how grueling an undertaking this may have been ...

Will: It's hard for us to appreciate the task that lies before, it's almost impossible for us in the 21st century to appreciate the challenge that marching to California from Santa Fe presented in 1846. The battalion has a pretty tough assignment. They are not only to march to California across the dessert southwest. They also have to build a wagon road. One thing we should remember is that the battalion was made up of men and women who would come from the East, from land that was green. None of them had seen anything every resembling a desert. To them the American southwest must have looked like the surface of Mars.

It's almost impossible to appreciate how different and alien the western scenery and landscape would have appeared to these people. You will also need to recognize what the country that existed between Santa Fe and California. It was some of the most challenging desert country in the world, not just in the American West. The battalion set off down a trading road, down the Rio Grande that was centuries old, and as it marches through New Mexico it's generally on established trade routes, but once it got out of today's New Mexico, it was entering terra incognita. Even Cooke's scouts have never been over this road. They don't know where they are going, they don't know what they are going to face, they don't know where water can be found on these desert marches, and they have only the scantiest reports that they glean from Indians and local citizens.

Ken: I thought of one episode. It was near the border of present day New Mexico and present day Arizona, where they are desperate for water and a scout manages to find a little crevice where a very, very small pool of water is found. As the men run forward they are trying to stick their spoons out and catch the water as it comes from the rocks, and Cooke basically forces them back and drives the mules in first to drink the water, which in diaries and journals produces extraordinary outrage, the dumb beasts before the men. Do you recall the incident that I'm talking about?

Will: I'm thinking it's the lost well. I'll talk about it.

Ken: But they cite this as Cooke's callousness for the men. How do you read that?

Will: Well when Cooke and the battalion meet each other they are both pretty skeptical. The battalion has had bad relations with its professional military officers, and although Phillip St. George Cooke had to have been an imposing and impressive officer, many of them felt he was a tyrant. One of his policies, that especially aggravated the enlisted men, was that the animals came first. The baggage animals, specifically the mules had priority. That meant after a long, dry march when they come up to a mere trickle, the spring, the animals drink it first. This, of course, is not going to hold popular with the infantrymen. But we need to recognize Cooke's logic. Cooke knew that without the animals there would be no baggage wagon. Without the baggage wagons there wouldn't be any food. Without the food there wouldn't be any Mormon Battalion. And it's interesting that although their initial meeting is not love at first sight, both Cooke and the military officers with him and the battalion begin to build a respect for each other. They begin to see that these professional military officers know what they are doing, that there's a logic to the discipline that they impose and this continual enforcement of rules is necessary or they will disintegrate into a mob. At the same time the professional soldiers begin to appreciate that these young midwestern frontiersmen are in many ways model soldiers. They are obedient. They respect civilian rights. They do basically what they are told and they have tremendous grit facing these enormous physical challenges these boys and men come through.

Ken: Some people, you will bring military history, gives myths to the Mormon Battalion. They didn't fight a conflict. They don't know the smell of gunpowder. They didn't repel the souls. They didn't seize the objective, and yet when you look at the journals the hint, the rumor of war, always seems to be one rise away. So you can't discount the fact that this was a military unit in a time of war, that there was that threat.

Will: It's interesting that the Mormon Battalion receives so little attention, even from historians in the Mexican War. It's not difficult to understand though. The Mormon Battalion does not storm Mexico City. They do not fight outnumbered battles in the mountains of Mexico, so that the typical colorful events that were featured in military history simply don't happen to the Mormon Battalion.

It does, however, have a substantial historical impact. It helps secure the conquest of California. That's immensely important. Later on the battalion has even greater contributions. Ironically, it's most historic activities happen after it's disbanded in July 1847, when Mormon veterans are present at the discovery of gold and they also begin laying out and blazing some of the most important wagon roads in America. Many of the freeways that we travel on today were first passed over by a wheeled vehicle driven by Mormon Battalion soldiers or veterans.

As the battalion left Council Bluff they had Brigham Young's promise that they wouldn't have to do any fighting if they were righteous. But as they approached the border of today's Mexico, they begin to hear reports of large Mexican forces. There is always the threat that they will have to do their basic job of getting in a shooting skirmish. It probably must have been a nightmare for Cooke because these guys have never been properly drilled, they basically knew how to form a line and execute a few simple maneuvers, but they were not a disciplined military force. Cooke handles this by very clever diplomacy. One of the big advantages the battalion has politically is for much of their march they are not going through hostile territory. The Mexican state of Sonora had not joined the national state in a war with the United States. The state of Sonora felt that they had been so poorly treated by the national government of Mexico that they saw no incentive in fighting a war with the United States. So

when the battalion approaches Tucson, the small military contingent, which was probably under 100 soldiers, simply retreats ten miles south of town and waits for the battalion to march on.

But Cooke deals with the threat of military violence quite cleverly. He negotiates with the Mexican commandant at Tucson. He points out that they have not come to oppress or confront the Mexican people themselves, and he's also helped by the remarkable discipline and good behavior of the battalion troops. One of the darker aspects of the Mexican War is the behavior of many American military units during the war. Units from Missouri and Texas were involved in a series of atrocities. They behaved deplorably, but the Mormon soldiers are model soldiers in many ways. They respect the rights and properties of the civilians and they treat the Mexican people they encounter so well that when a couple of units are pulled out of Santiago, the local citizens petition to get them back.

Ken: Let's go forward to the arrival, because I'm glad you explained two items, one of my agenda items. But the arrival in California, several journals speak movingly when they pass through the last mountain range, they pass by Mission San Luis Rey, and they go about a mile further, and they stop and suddenly there is three or four miles in the distance of this great blue sparkling jewel, the sight of the Pacific Ocean. What does that mean?

Will: The most difficult part of the battalion march came after they crossed the Colorado River, at today's Yuma. They then faced some of the most difficult, stark deserts on the American Continent. They faced long marches without a drop of water, and it goes on and on and on. But finally they reach Caruso Creek, they quench their thirst, and the country begins opening up. They've reached California. They've reached this paradise. Imagining what Southern California must have looked like in 1846 is very difficult to do, but it was fairly close to paradise. They are also encountering Spanish culture. When they reach their initial destination at Mission San Luis Rey, they find the king of missions, a beautiful extraordinary building that today is still one of the most beautiful buildings in Southern California. At that point they are only a few miles from the Pacific Coast. They march to the head of the San Luis Rey Valley, climb up the bluff, and look west. There they see the blue Pacific Ocean. Many of these men had never seen an ocean before, and they knew that that was their ultimate destination, but to have seen it must have given them a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

Ken: Once they are there, largely the conflict between the United States and Mexico, at least in North America, is at an end. Well what is the purpose of the battalion now that they have arrived on the California coast. What becomes their purpose?

Will: The American conquest of California is a nasty business. It's one of the tragic ironies of American history that the people of California were ready to declare independence and then probably join the United States willingly. But just as those meetings were about to happen a young adventurer named John C. Fremont orchestrates what is known as the Bear Flag Revolt, one of the most disgusting political events in American history. The Bear Flag Revolt essentially is carried out by a bunch of reckless adventurers and insults the Mexican people and provokes a tremendous amount of hostility. It's ironic that the initial military conquest of California is quite easy. The United States Navy sails into Monterey in San Francisco, figures the presidios, and there is virtually no violence. The Mexican people of California didn't want to belong to Mexico, and they saw many advantages in becoming part of the United States. But it is the incompetence of American military officers like John C. Fremont and Commodore Robert Stockton that essentially drives the Mexican people to rebel.

In the winter before the Mormon Battalion arrives the Mexican's revolt in Southern California, run all American authorities out, they fight a battle with Steven Kearney as he and his depleted force enter

Southern California and almost obliterate them. So the military situation is quite dicey and by the time General Kearney gets to California he's in a bad situation. In his saddlebags he has orders from the President to become military governor of California, but what he finds is that John C. Fremont has already been installed as governor of California by Commodore Stockton. Fremont is a vain, ambitious, in many ways ruthless character who apparently has no concept of military discipline. He had been appointed by Congress as a colonel, but for all they knew he was simply a captain, and he refuses to submit to Kearney's military authority. Because Kearney has only a handful of troops left, he plays along. But when the Mormon Battalion arrives, Kearney has the balance of power. Kearney is then able to assert proper military authority and Kearney and his officers do a very good job equitably in administering California.

Ken: So the battalion really becomes a physical swing force that changes the very phase and direction of what would be the future of California.

Will: When the Mormon Battalion marches into Southern California in January 1847, a lot of the political questions are up in the air. John C. Fremont's recruited the California Brigade, which consists of mountain men, pioneer settlers, and Indians. It's as wild a military force as has ever marched under the American flag. He is using that military power to back up his claim to be governor of California. It's only when General Kearney has the Mormon Battalion behind him that he's able to assert his proper military authority. Fremont is so insubordinate that there is an open question about whether he will in fact mutiny and defy Kearney and whether he will have the California Battalion fight a pitched battle with the Mormon Battalion. Fortunately calmer heads prevail and, I think it's probably the force of the professional officers like Cooke, that persuade Fremont to set aside his personal ambition and behave like a proper army officer.

Ken: The battalion then becomes an important escort guard as Fremont goes back to face the certainties of military justice. Tell me about that role.

Will: John C. Fremont poses some tremendous political problems for General Kearney. He's a national hero, he's a son-in-law of the most powerful man in the Senate, Thomas Hart Benton, he is a good personal leader, his men are devoted to him, but he's arrogant, he's insubordinate, he is not a good military officer. So Kearney recognizes he's got to get Fremont out of California before he provokes another war. So he essentially orders Fremont to accompany him back to Fort Leavenworth. Kearney, having conquered California or secured the conquest, wants to get to Mexico. Virtually every professional soldier in California doesn't want to occupy a conquered territory. They want to get to Mexico City where the glory is and participate in the military campaigns. So along with Phillip St. George Cooke and with John C. Fremont in toe, Kearney sets out to cross the plains. It's interesting that he takes with him a lifeguard. There are 15 picked riflemen from the Mormon Battalion, and their job is to protect the life of General Kearney. Now whom are they going to protect it from? Well, there are a lot of Indians, there are a lot of Brigham's out on the trail, but essentially they are going to protect Kearney from Fremont. Fremont has orders to march behind Kearney, orders which, of course, he violates. He and his entourage march as a separate military unit, but when they finally make it back to Fort Leavenworth, John C. Fremont is arrested and he is court marshaled and he is drummed out of the army. He is then pardoned by President Polk, but he is so offended that he leaves the army only to come back during the Civil War with disastrous results.

Ken: Let's pick up again the consequences of the Mormon role in manifest destiny. Take it any direction you want.

Will: It's odd, but Western historians have not really paid much attention to how central the Mormons are in carrying out manifest destiny. In many ways the Mormons, being positioned as they were on the frontier, are right at the cutting edge of manifest destiny. The arrival of Sam Brannon and 230 Mormons in San Francisco in 1846, changes the political balance there. Brannon and the Brooklyn saints have tremendous influence in California, and San Francisco is, as H. H. Bancroft said, is for a time very largely a Mormon town. In many ways the Mormons become the cutting edge of manifest destiny. They're some of the leading tools that James K. Polk uses to concur the American Southwest.

Ken: Is there not a great irony at work as we look at a neglected, abused, even punished sect that is cast out, that ceases to take its leave from the United States of America, and, in fact, ultimately plays this role of being the vanguard of the media message of America. Can you address that irony?

Will: One of the most great ironies of American history is that the Mormons, who had set out to leave the United States, who wanted to found an independent nation in Mexico, wind up being instrumental in the conquest and acquisition of the American Southwest. It's something that they didn't anticipate and it's something that in many ways Brigham Young probably resents because he had an opportunity. If he'd been able to get west in 1846, maybe he could have established an independent country. But as it is, he's trapped in the United States and he has to deal with the United States government. But one of the great ironies of American history is that the Mormons are so influential in manifest destiny. They had felt betrayed by the country and they had no interest in fighting a war with anyone for the United States, but they do become the cutting edge of manifest destiny and although they want to leave the United States, they wind up helping to secure the American Southwest for the United States.

Ken: There are two other reflections that I scribbled notes on as we were moving along. First, as I read the journals, the wonder that is evident in some of these men as they start to truly experience the grandeur of the American West. Open prairies that are endless seas of native grass, huge herds of bison roaming the plains, turning the ground black for as far as they could see. There really is, isn't there, a sense of wonder as they start to experience this very different corner of the world.

Will: In some ways when these young Mormon soldiers march into the frontier, they are moving into another world. They are moving into a world that was unlike anything that they had ever seen. They first of all cross the Great Plains where you could see for miles and miles. They encounter enormous buffalo herds. They find stark, barren deserts. They run into Spanish culture. Many of the journals comment on how impressed they are with the missions and churches that they find along the route. They are charmed by the Mexican culture they encounter. Abner Blackburn writes about how several charming señoritas came out to greet the battalion as it was marching towards Santa Fe and how their drummer Jessie Earl charmed them. The young Mormons are also quite taken with Mexican culture, the food. They loved the fandangos. They are quite taken with the alcohol that is available. But it is this encounter with the new, with the alien, that has a transformative effect on these young soldiers.

Ken: Do they, in fact, carry some of that along with them as they move on? I know often times when I read about them encountering the Puma Indians in Arizona and being given witness to irrigation techniques that you could see it clicking in their own minds and recognizing what an essential ingredient that this is survival.

Will: When the battalion left the Missouri River most of the men were teenagers. They were farm boys, they were midwestern farm boys. Being teenagers they were very impressionable and they began to absorb the Mexican southwest. They were fascinated by the culture they encountered. They

were fascinated by the barcaroles who ran the enormous cattle herds in California. They began to absorb the culture of the frontier. In New Mexico they saw irrigation techniques that had been in place for thousands of years. They observed this very closely and they began to see how useful these techniques would be in surviving in the West. These men perceived the transformation themselves. When John Steele reaches the Salt Lake Valley he recalls leaving the Missouri as a farm boy and he says if he could look back, if he had met himself a year ago, "I would not have known myself." He was so transformed with a frontiersman's clothes, the long fringed leather jacket, the beard, the feathers in his hat, that he had become something very different. The experience of the Mormon Battalion is essential in creating the Mormon frontiersman, and it is these frontiersmen who ensure the survival and then the success of the Mormon experiment in the West.

Ken: Excellent. One thing I want to touch on, and we brushed past, we have the rumor of war at Tucson, but we have what approaches to be the only near-armed conflict is the Battle of the Bulls in the Arizona territory, or what would become the Arizona territory. Some people laugh at it, some people mythologize it, but I would imagine in certain respect it must have been terrifying to have dozens, if not upward up to a hundred of these angry renegade bulls roaring around the camp. Tell me a little bit about the Battle of the Bulls, as you perceive it.

Will: Well the great military engagement of the Mormon Battalion of course was the Battle of the Bulls. In some ways it shows you that these guys were just learning how to be frontiersmen. The unit had sent some men out in advance as hunters. They'd run into a band of wild cattle and they shot a couple of the bulls. Now the men were marching up a river valley and the bulls turn around and head down that river valley in force with a large herd of bulls and run right into the Mormon Battalion. It's quite the conflict. There's a great description by Phillip St. George Cooke of how he is watching these animals come charging at him and one of the Mormon militiamen has his rifle and it's loaded and he stands and waits for one particular bull who is heading right at him and Colonel Cooke. Cooke says, "Fire, shoot the damn thing." The man holds his fire until the bull is almost right on top of him and bam he shoots it between the eyes and drops it and Cooke is mightily impressed.

There is a story connected to the Battle of the Bulls that is more important than the physical conflict. It comes from the question historian David Bigler asked, "Why were they bulls? Why when the battalion ran into these animals were they all bulls?" It tells a lot about the state of the Mexican frontier. These bulls were actually descended from the animals on Spanish ranches that had been established in the 18th century, and initially that colonization effort had been pretty successful, but by the 1840s the Apaches had come in and had become a powerful military force, and much of the Mexican Southwest had been abandoned. When the Indians came in they ran off the cattle, the cattle went wild, and Indians began hunting them. What they killed were the cows because the cows tasted better and were easier to hunt. So you wound up with these huge collections of bulls with no cows, which made them aggravated, and made them pretty fearsome opponents in any kind of a confrontation. But what that herd of bulls actually tells us about the Southwest is that the Mexican government had essentially lost control of the territory. It had reverted back to the Indians and the political stability that the Americans brought to the southwest was in many ways welcomed by the Mexican people.

Ken: Now I have caught up to the point to where I can rejoin the battalion in California. Fremont has been marched back under guard to Fort Leavenworth. The battalion, which starts out at San Luis Rey, finds itself kind of jittering back and forth between Los Angeles and San Diego. They have a squeamish, at least one squeamish, with native Americans in the area, but by and large how do we look at these few months, the last remaining months, of the battalion's period of enlistment when they

are actually in California. What is their job?

Will: As recent experiences in Afghanistan suggest, being an occupying force is no picnic. The battalion is somewhat fortunate because it's not in a militantly hostile environment. But occupation duty is tedious, boring, frustrating, and the battalion pretty much experiences all of those negative aspects of its dull duty. They essentially kept busy. They spent a lot of time drilling. They helped build a fort in Los Angeles. One of the battalion soldiers remembers his stay in San Diego and says, "I think we whitewashed every building in the town." But they also begin to see California. They take some side trips and Lieutenant James Pace goes out to try to find some horses to buy, but he discovers an enormous gold mine in San Eusebio Canyon where Mexicans had been mining gold for almost a decade. But they also begin to see the agricultural potential of California. They find a climate that is unlike anything somebody from New England could even dream about. They find a culture that they find pretty attractive and many of them develop an attachment to California that never goes away.

Ken: I want to follow that for a second, but let's bring the battalion's term of service, at least that initial enlistment, to an end and the leave taking that's offered these people, an order that is actually cut by Phillip St. George Cooke and how it serves as a kind of an expression, an expression that actually even surprised some of the members of the battalion with how heart felt it was. What does Cooke attempt to convey to these men as he's bidding them goodbye and a job well done.

Will: When the battalion reaches Mission San Luis Rey, where they bivouac for a while, Phillip St. George Cooke issues one of the most remarkable orders in American military history, and it is a tribute to the accomplishment of the Mormon Battalion in making that arduous march and building that wagon road across the American Southwest. It's a very generous act by Cooke, and I think it shows the mutual respect that came out of this hard, hard experience. The men appreciated that this officer had led them through a task that many people would have considered impossible. It was Cooke's leadership and discipline and example that got these men across the deserts alive. Most authorities believe that if command had gone to the militia captains, they never would have got to California, or if they had, they would have marched in as a disorganized mob. But Cooke gets them through the job and he tells them, "You men have accomplished something that almost no other military unit in the history of the World has accomplished." It reflects that mutual respect that came out of this incredible arduous march.

Ken: One of the things that you and I checked about in the past is how the reality of this story is so compelling that you need not mythologize, but one of the mythologies that exist is that we needed enlistment, all the battalion heads back and gathers in Zion. Reality teaches us otherwise. I mean the facts point in different directions. It wasn't, "Okay we're done, we are leaving." There were people who found their affection staying there in California and different opportunities. Perhaps you could just address this. The battalion term of service comes to an end. Did they, in fact, all leave?

Will: The battalion is discharged at Pueblo Los Angeles in July 1847, after a year of service. Upon the discharge the conflict that had been brewing within the battalion among the Mormons comes to a head and they divide up. One large group, the largest group of about 220 men, march off under a command of Levi Hancock, the spiritual authority. A group of about 50 men take off under Captain Hunt, the military authority. About 100 more of them, 80 some, becomes volunteers in California. But there is a drive and desire among these men. Part of it is a desire to unite with the church, to get back with their people, but the leading desire is to get back with families, and this leads to some astonishing adventures. In many ways the Mormon Battalion story really begins on July 16, 1847, when they are

discharged at Pueblo Los Angeles. After that event the battalion really makes its mark in the West.

Ken: Take as much time, take advantage of this. Keep going ahead and help me review the native story.

Will: One of the great contributions of the battalion is blazing trails. The first wheeled vehicle taken from Los Angeles to Salt Lake is taken over what is today basically I15 by Mormon Battalion veterans. The key gateway to California and the gold rush, through Carson Pass, is blazed from west to east by two parties of Mormon Battalion veterans. The first wagons taken over the Salt Lake cutoff that would integrate Salt Lake into the California trail, is opened by Mormon Battalion veterans. And of course during their service they opened what became Cooke's Wagon Road, another one of the main pathways to El Dorado during the California gold rush. It is interesting that James Brown, one of the veterans, says, "We learned a lot about life in the West during our service." As they contemplated opening a wagon road over Carson Pass he said, "We figured we could do pretty much anything." And in many ways they do. Mormon Battalion veterans are also the workers at Sutter's sawmill on the American River in January 1848, when one of the most important events in American history happens.

Their foreman, James Marshall, is experimenting with the mill race, is running water through it and goes to check that it's deep enough, and in the bottom of the mill race he sees several chunks of gold and metal. He picks them up and on July 19, 1848, the West changes forever. It is interesting that two weeks later the treaty of Guadalupe is signed, the Mexican War ends, and the American West becomes American. It's right in the wake of the discovery of gold.

Ken: We've kind of turned, we've alluded to them a couple of times, but the Battalion at its discharge, some make their way straight east and then . . . , but still many others head through the central part where what we call the central valley or the heart of California to head back through to the Great Basin. Still others go up a coastal route, Monterey, and they are in the proximity of . . . I'm wondering from your understanding and your feeling or understanding of the command of Samuel Brannen. Did Brannen and the battalion come into contact along the way. Since he was the man who was convinced that California was the place. Did he intentionally assert influence?

Will: Most of the veterans head north from Los Angeles with Levi Hancock. They go to Sutter's Fort and then they head out over the California Trail and at Donner Pass they meet one of the true characters of Mormon history, Samuel Brannen. Now Brannen was a Mormon newspaper publisher, preacher, and adventurer who led about 230 Mormons to California in 1846. He got to the American West an entire year before Brigham Young. In spring of 1847, he headed east to try to find where Brigham Young was and he meets the Mormon pioneer company on Green River. He spends the next two weeks desperately trying to get Brigham Young to continue on to California. Young tells him straight up, "We have not the means." The Mormon immigration is at the end; it simply can't go another thousand miles to California. Brannen has seen the Great Basin by this time. He's seen California. He doesn't think there is any comparison, but he fails to persuade Brigham Young to go any farther west and he takes orders back to California that he hands to the battalion officers at Carson Pass.

Brannen returns to California as president of the saints in California, and meets the returning battalion veterans at Donner Pass, and he hands them orders from Brigham Young, which are, "If you have families or supplies, come on to Salt Lake. If you don't go back to California, earn some money, collect some seeds and supplies and come out when you can afford to." At that point the battalion veterans divide up. About 100 of them go back to Sutter's Fort where they provide a great work force

for Sutter and participate in the discovery of gold, and a hundred of the rest keep going east to find their families. Brannen tells them that Brigham Young has got to come to California. They will never make it in the Great Basin. You can't grow crops there, it's a virtual desert, and once you have seen California, who would possibly want to stop in the Salt Lake Valley? The men who head east from Sutter's Fort have some of the most remarkable stories in the annals of the battalion, and there is a driving motivation pushing these men who have not seen their families for a year and that is a determination that they are going to cross the 2000 miles of the California trail and find their families. As we look at the stories of what happened after the battalion's discharge, they are generally called the return of the Mormon Battalion. And often they say they return to the Salt Lake Valley. Well nobody in the battalion had been to the Salt Lake Valley. What they were returning to was the church, and more importantly to their families. As they head east in 1847, many of these veterans stop at Salt Lake, but most of them keep pushing on, even though it is early winter by the time they reach Salt Lake. They are told by the people in Salt Lake, who don't have enough food themselves to get through the winter, that they can buy supplies at Fort Bridger. They go to Fort Bridger and find there is not a sack of flour for sale within 300 miles. But they are told that 500 miles away at Fort Laramie that they can buy supplies at Fort Laramie. So they set off through winter blizzards, through conditions that are hard to imagine, and finally straggle into Fort Laramie to find out there is no flour at Fort Laramie either. The traders at Fort Laramie tell them not to shoot any buffalo because the Indians would get mad at them, but they keep pushing on. They wind up eating their mules. They fortunately manage to kill a few buffalo here and there. They glean corn from Indian corn fields and they stagger into Winter Quarters about Christmas time 1847.

Some of these stories are among the most powerful tales in the West. The human drama in some of these stories of the reuniting families are among the most dramatic in western history. One of the veterans reaches Winter Quarters and finds that his wife has died and his friends take him to meet his son. The little boy looks up and says, "Who is this ragged man?" Others come and find that their wives and children are dead, that all their hopes are dashed. Others come to find that they have new children, but all make this enormous sacrifice to get back to their families.

Ken: Before time comes to a close, we've alluded to the role of women. There are some remarkable that are part of this entire expedition, not just to the California Coast, but the whole circle. Take some time to think out loud about the role of the woman in this battalion. Any singular women you know come to mind?

Will: When Phillip St. George Cooke marches west from Santa Fe he takes along five laundresses with him. One of them goes back with the last sick detachment to Pueblo where she gets divorced, interesting. But the other four women have extraordinary experiences. One of them, her prized possession is her washtub. As the battalion is struggling across the dessert to southern California, they find damp sand. They try to build a well. As they dig down the sides of the hole collapse on them. Finally they go to the laundress and they take her washtub and knock the bottom out of it to try to shore up the sides of this well. It still doesn't work but eventually by digging deep enough they do get to water. It's odd to think about that kind of a sacrifice, but these women in many ways made much more profound sacrifices. One of the great heroines of the Mormon Battalion is Melissa Corey, who is the wife of a battalion sergeant named William Corey, a charming delightful young man, and his journal is one of the very best records of the march. After getting to California they go north with Jefferson Hunt and settle for a time in Monterey, and there after making this incredible march across the southwest, Melissa Corey gives birth to a son. William Corey writes to James Ferguson and says, "I'm the proudest man in California."

Two weeks later the baby dies. William Corey himself is not healthy. Melissa goes for a stroll on the beach at Monterey, picks up a gem, a moonstone, and keeps it as a keepsake of the child who she has left behind. During the gold rush she has it made into a ring. That ring is carried over the Carson Pass and survives with the descendant to this day. Years later she goes back and tries to find the grave of her child and is unable to. By the time the Corey's get to Great Salt Lake, William is quite sick.

Ken: Before we get them to Salt Lake, can we talk about the pass, of fighting their way through the Sierras because ....

Will: Yes, yes. A phenomenon happens in Gold Rush, California that baffles people. It baffles them at the time and it's still somewhat surprising. The Mormons are in on the ground floor. They're present at the invention of the gold rush. In some ways Sam Brannen starts the gold rush and they are literally picking up gold out of the streams. Some of them are making a hundred, two hundred, three hundred dollars a day. Gold is there for the taking, and this is when in the East a dollar would have been a good day's salary. So with all this wealth at their fingertips, in June 1848, many of these Mormon veterans pack up and head for the Great Salt Lake Valley. They include Melissa Corey and her husband William. Forty-five men and Melissa Corey set out to blaze a wagon road over Carson Pass.

James Brown says, "We've become pretty good frontiersmen and we thought we could do just about anything." It's an arduous trip. It's marked by tragedy when the three scouts they've sent out are found murdered in the mountains, probably by Indians but maybe by white bandits. It's a difficult remarkable adventure. Melissa Corey is the only woman with this party of 45 men. One of the battalion veterans gives her a tremendous tribute in saying what an inspiration she was to them as they marched across the southwest and then blazed this extraordinary tale. She talked about it in her old age and remembered mostly the fear of Indians and the constant howling of wolves.

After getting to Great Salt Lake City, William Corey's health was deteriorating, and in fact he had tuberculosis and within a year she was a widow. But one of the most happy commemorations of the Mormon Battalion took place in the late 1990s near Carson Pass when a nameless peak overlooking the California Sierra was named Melissa Corey Peak.

Ken: So here we go, the deep rest, moving forward ten years in time, another one of the great ironies 1857, drums of war being beaten again and this time once again is of the United States Army and involved members of the Mormon Church, but this time they are called to stand on opposing lines and look at each other like Echo Canyon, The Utah War. People shrug it off but I tend to view the Utah War as quite a significant event. The army marches ultimately under the command of Albert E. Johnson but there is an important figure at the head of that U.S. Army column, Colonel Phillip St. George Cooke, squaring off with men who had served underneath him in the Mormon Battalion. I've set the stage, explain that, recapitulate it if you will.

Will: I'll start a little bit earlier. Despite it's tremendous sacrifices, Brigham Young was not very happy with the Mormon Battalion. I think it was partly because he'd been unable to meet all of his commitments to take care of the families. He simply didn't have the resources. He wasn't able as he promised to give them priority to get them to Salt Lake first. I think that gnawed at him, but often during the next few years, he'd talk about what a worthless bunch of milk cows the battalion veterans were and the habits and ways they brought back from California offended many of the Mormon elders. They were young men, they tended to be rambunctious, and they did not respond well to being excommunicated for example practicing the Spanish rusty. The Spanish rusty was when a man would ride on his horse and put his girlfriend in front of him. This was considered scandalous in Salt Lake

and when six Mormon Battalion veterans did it in the spring of 1849, they were immediately excommunicated.

But over time Brigham Young begins to recognize that these men had made a pretty significant contribution and they could be very useful because almost from the time Brigham Young entered the Salt Lake Valley, he had challenged federal authority. In July 1847 he said, "If American authorities come out here and try to order us around, we will hang them." That defiance built over the next ten years and ultimately resulted in James Buchanan sending an army to accompany the man who was assigned to replace Brigham Young as governor. It is that dramatic confrontation which I think in many ways is the key of that of 19th century Mormonism. It's a conflict between the theocratic kingdom that Brigham Young had built in the West and the American Republic. Two philosophies and governing organizations that were at loggerheads, directly opposed.

The great irony of the Utah War is that the veterans of the Mormon Battalion make up a good part of the Nauvoo Legion, the Utah militia. An even greater irony, the second dragoons were commanded by Phillip St. George Cooke, who is now a full colonel and a man of tremendous influence and respect in the army. There is a letter, a forged letter, that is published in the New York Times in early 1858, allegedly by Cooke denouncing the Mormons as rebels and cowards, and that letter evokes a passionate response from the Mormons, particularly Cooke's former sergeant-major James Ferguson. Ferguson is now a general of the Nauvoo Legion and he writes an impassioned letter to Cooke denouncing him for betraying his old soldiers, and for speaking so harshly of them and pointing out that if Cooke needed a lesson in Mormon courage he sure had it in 1846. It was an unfair writer because Cooke didn't write the initial slam at the Mormons, and sends Ferguson a very brief note saying, "I didn't write the letter."

According to legend when the army marches through Salt Lake City at the end of June in 1858, Mormon Battalion veterans are left to guard the empty city. The city has been evacuated and the buildings have all been prepared to burn. Mormon Battalion veterans are left behind to set the fires if the army misbehaves. In fact the army marched through with perfect discipline, the battalion soldiers don't have to set fire to the city, and allegedly as he marched past some of these veterans, Phillip St. George Cooke took off his hat to salute them.

Ken: One hundred and fifty years later we sit and regard this as the lost chapter of America history, the Mormon Battalion. The war with Mexico is on ... Why is it important not to, after these fifteen, sixteen decades, why does it still have relevance or important to us to understanding the American experience?

Will: I think we need to remember the contributions and the achievement of the Mormon Battalion because it shows what ordinary people did to build the American we have today. Often the story of plain hard workingmen and woman is forgotten in history as we tell the larger glorious stories of historical giants. But in fact it was men like the Mormon Battalion veterans and their wives who helped settle the Mormon west. As historian Michael Landon has said, "The Mormon Battalion became the mules on whose back Brigham Young settled the West." And fortunately since so many Utahans are descended from battalion veterans, that memory is kept pretty well alive. But we need to remember too what a role it played in forging our country, giving us a continental nation and that the sacrifices that these men and women made produced the benefits of liberty and prosperity that we enjoy. It's hard to recognize the contribution that the Mormon Battalion made to the Mormon West.

They became leaders of Mormon colonizing experiments. They brought a certain level of military experience that the Mormons used in their wars with the Indians, but most importantly they learned about western survival. From New Mexico they brought irrigation techniques. From California they brought wheat that had been acclimatized to the West. They brought a variety of crops back, but mostly they brought back the discipline and skills that made them a new kind of American, the Mormon frontiersman, someone who could take a sack of beef jerky and set out from Salt Lake and make it all the way back to the Missouri River, or someone who could set out in the middle of winter and found the first settlements in southern Utah, people of tremendous character and accomplishments. One thing I love about the Mormon Battalion is, it's the story of ordinary people and they are the ones who deserve the credit for building the society we have today.

#### Battalion - About the Program - Interviews - David Bigler - Interviewed by Ken Verdoia

**Ken:** We need a place to begin, so let's go back in time to the summer of 1846 and the wife of a young man you've become very familiar with as Azaria Smith. The word passes around that there's a captain from the Dragoons by the name of James Allen who has appeared almost out of nowhere with an invitation for the Mormons to join the United States Army. Can you help us understand the life of young A. Smith at this point in the summer of 1846?

**David:** In 1846, Azaria Smith was just going on eighteen years of age. He was from upstate New York. His father Albert Smith, like most of those who enlisted was very bitter about being called to enlist. He said for a government that persecuted the saints the way our government has to call us now into service is more cruel than the grave. He took his son Azaria Smith with him and Azaria marched with him to Fort Leavenworth on August 1, 1846 on his eighteenth birthday, to become a soldier in what was really the most unique military outfit ever enlisted in the U.S. Army.

**Ken:** Having spent a good deal of time examining the journal of Azaria Smith, can you help us understand this young man's experiences on this most arduous of military marches? What are some of the lingering images that stayed with you from the review of his journal?

**David:** I remember him from his journal as being a very endearing young man. He had a very upbeat positive spirit. Where everyone else would complain about hardship and the cruel desert, he'd say what a beautiful prairie, he'd write in his journal. He loved nature. He wrote poetry. He was very kind hearted and very generous and helpful to other people. Azaria Smith is a very adorable young man. He missed his mother terribly all through his battalion experience. More than anything else, he missed his mother.

**Ken:** There must be reflected in his journal, also the sense of being tried by events, by the great experience. This is, after all, a 2,000-mile march through the most arduous wilderness that the American Southwest can offer. How does he reflect on those trials.

**David:** There are many complaints of battalion members about the hardships they suffered. They were men who were unused to military discipline. And military discipline in those days was especially

severe. The march they made was a very difficult trial. The unique thing about Azaria Smith is he never complained. You never really know whether he's suffering or not because he never says so. He got dust in his eyes at one point and had to go to the battalion surgeon for medicine for his eyes, but he was always upbeat, always cheerful. I remember on January 1 of that year, of 1847, they were in the desert of Arizona and he writes in his journal, "January first, a new year. Here am I going to California," like some teenager today going to California for the first time to Disneyland.

**Ken:** Fascinating. He completes his his term of military service. At the point of discharge, is there any uncertainty in young Azaria's mind about what comes next?

**David:** There really isn't, he's going with his father, he and his father are going together, Albert Smith, sergeant of company B. He feels very comfortable as a member of Mormon culture and society. He feels accepted in this community. And so he has no uncertainty as to where he is going or what he's going to do. He goes along with the rest of the party. And after the discharge, members of the battalion went in a number of different ways. Some re-enlisted, some went through Monterey and San Francisco. A. Smith went with the largest party under [cross talk and begin again]

**David Bigler:** Azaria Smith and his father went with more than 150 members of the battalion, or former members in the largest party under general authority Levi Hancock. And they left Los Angeles, traveled down the central valley of California following the San Juacain River to a Sutter's Fork at the confluence of the San Juacain and Sacramento Rivers, to investigate a new salmon. [cross talk to start again]

**Ken:** They arrive at Sutter's Fork, what are they looking for?

**David Bigler:** Just before they reach Sutter's Fork, they head for Sutter's Fork, just before they reach Sutter's Fork, they learn that Brigham Young and the other pioneers have settled in the Salt Lake Valley, and so they know now that that's their destination. So they go to Sutter's Fork for provisions to have blacksmith work done and to prepare for this journey over the Sierra following the new route that's been opened up several years before, along the line of today's I-80. So they travel over the Sierra, Nevada and at the present town of Truckee California, they met Sam Brannon and messengers from Brigham Young's encampment, leadership at Salt Lake Valley, telling the younger men to go back and work for a year before coming on, because they didn't have enough provisions to feed all of the people, all of the mouths that had arrived that summer at Salt Lake Valley.

**Ken:** But you just introduced the name of a man that I am fascinated by. You tell me near Truckee, near current day Truckee, that these former battalion members encounter a figure. A co-religionist, by the name of Samuel Brannon. Tell me a little bit in your own way about Sam Brannon.

**David:** Well, Sam Brannon went to California ahead of the battalion on the ship Brooklyn with about 230 Mormons, coming to California around the horn. And he located here, established a settlement on the Stanislos River in the, in the Sacramento central valley and now he headed east to meet Brigham Young to get the Mormons to come to California and locate here. He was turned down by Brigham Young, so on his way back to to California, he met the Mormon battalion veterans going east over the Sierra Nevada near Truckee and with him was James Brown. And they advised, they told them then, they confirmed that the settlement had been in Salt Lake Valley and the younger men, unmarried men, were told to go back and find work in California before coming on. Just before that, Brannon and James Brown had engaged in fisticuffs. They did not get along at all well [laughter] and he's quite a

character in California history. One of the great names in early California history.

**Ken:** Is there a sense of disappointment among members of the battalion. I know .... because they're going to meet families but among the younger men, this sense of the admonishment from Brigham Young, turn back, earn your money, earn your provisions and then come on next year. Is there a sense of disappointment?

**David:** Henry Bigler was accepted. He wanted to go on, but he accepted the instruction pretty well. Azaria Smith was deeply disappointed. He wanted to see his mother. He was leaving his father for the first time, so he was having no more contact now with either of his parents. So he was deeply disappointed when he headed back. He was also hurt, badly injured. At Los Angeles, they had purchased wild horses after the discharge. He had been thrown from a horse and had struck his head on a rock and suffered what sounds like a circular fracture of the skull. So he was under a lot of pain a good part of the time. He wrote in his journal that he felt like a cat in a strange garret. He was very lonesome and it was hard for him at the turn-back, but he did it because that was the counsel from Mormon leaders.

**Ken:** What kind of reception do these young men receive when they return to Sutter's Fort? They're obviously looking for work. What type of reception do they see? Who do they meet?

**David:** Well, John Sutter is one of the great men of early California history. He was a very kind, generous man. John Sutter built his fort on a 50,000-square-mile, I'm sorry acre. [starts again]

**David:** Okay. John Sutter established his fort, his trading place on a fifty thousand acre land grant from the Mexican Government. He was a very generous man. He never turned down anyone who needed a job, whether he could afford to pay them or not. And most of the time he really couldn't afford to pay them. He was never able to get out of debt. But when nearly a hundred Mormon battalion veterans showed up, he promised every one of them who would work a job. And Azaria Smith and Henry Bigler and others were among those who were employed by John Sutter. And he went to work then at first on a griss mill he was building on the American River where the present University of California at Sacramento and then James Marshall came to their encampment and said he needed some men to work at a saw mill on the South Fork of the American River. And James Marshall and Sutter had formed a partnership to build this sawmill. Their plan was to saw timber in the mountains and to float it down the South Fork of the American River to the Sacramento River and then into San Francisco, where a new settlement was forming, to be used as lumber. And so Azaria Smith and Henry Bigler, Israel Evans, a non-Mormon named Charles Bennett, and several others decided to go with James Marshall to Caloma which is an Indian name for the place where the saw mill was located on the river. And where Marshall had started to build a mill.

**Ken:** Now you just walked us to the eve of where those truly remarkable events rewrite the history of nations. And yet, from the journals that I've read, it starts out as a completely unremarkable event. Tell me about the discovery of gold at the American River.

**David:** Well the discovery, there are only two men who recorded the discovery on the day it happened, or the week it happened. That was Henry Bigler and Azaria Smith. Everyone else there didn't think it was all that a big a deal. As I remember, Azaria Smith recorded it in his journal after several other items. Henry Bigler recorded it that same day and all he said was this day some kind of gold was found, some kind metal was found in the tail raise that looks like gold. Marshall is gone, the boss of

the mill discovered it and he's gone to find out about it. But no one thought it was a big deal. That only two men recorded the discovery, points up that the people who worked there weren't all that impressed at the time.

For that reason, their journals -- these two Mormon Battalion veterans, become the only source in California history for identifying the date and the discovery. Years later, self-claimed discoverers literally came out of the woodwork and said they were the ones who discovered gold. And they celebrated the discovery on the wrong day, on the 18th or 19th. About 1885, the great California journalist and historian John Hattel was asked to tell about the gold discovery at the annual meeting of the Society of California Pioneers. He had heard about Henry Bigler and so he sent a copy of his talk to Henry Bigler, asking him to read it and tell him if it was accurate or not. And Bigler wrote back and said, in effect, looks okay to me, except you got the wrong date. [laughter] It was on the 24th of January. And he referred Hattel to Azaria Smith for confirmation and so it was that Azaria Smith that year wrote in his journal after a number of other things, like buying some lindy cloth for his wife and other things. Said he got a letter from John Hattel wanting to know about what day gold was discovered. And he said I sent him a long letter telling him it was on the 24th of January, 1848.

**Ken:** So, this little noted event -- it's only noted by two of the battalion members in their journals -- does begin to pick up steam. Can you tell us about the experience of the battalion members as the discovery of gold becomes of greater importance and more widespread interest.

**David:** They became really quite amazed by it. After Sam Brannon heard they discovered it, and got a vial of the gold flakes and run through the streets of San Francisco crying "gold, gold!" holding this up. Ships were left deserted in the harbor. Ranches and farms were deserted. This is in 1848 now before the big gold rush of 49. People came from everywhere in California and the battalion men were amazed by it. Most of them didn't stay. While as the news spread around the world, men risked their lives and everything they had to get to where Azarias Smith and Henry Bigler were and all Henry Bigler wanted to do was to get back and join the Mormon people and all Azaria Smith wanted to do was to see his mother. He said years later, "I didn't care whether there was gold in the vicinity or not. All I wanted to do was see my mother."

There were many stories a-among Mormons in later years that the battalion members had been the ones who discovered the gold. And Brigham Young had this impression at one time. And I think it was from a misunderstanding that resulted from the fact that two Mormon battalion veterans, Wilford Hudson and Sidney Willis, discovered the first big gold strike at Mormon Island, what became known as Mormon Island, near the confluence of the north and south forks of the American River, near what is now Folsom, California. This became the target, the place where the forty niners were headed. And the reason it did, I'm going on and on.

**Ken:** No, you're doing great.

**David:** Okay. [cross talk]

**Ken:** In fact, resume with that, this place became the focus.

**David:** This place became the focus of the gold rush of 1849. And the reason it did is that the Mormon battalion veterans and some few from the ship Brooklyn opened a new wagon road over the Sierra, south of the Donner Pass route, south of Lake Tahoe. They were the first ones to take wagons over it.

And as they got on the other side near Carson City, Nevada, they headed north east and joined the existing California trail. And there they met the California immigrants coming west from the East, who had not heard about the gold discovery. They showed them the pouches of gold that they had and these people went nuts. One old man who was about 70 years old threw his hat in the air and cried, "Hallelujah! I'll die a rich man yet." [chuckle]

So the immigrants coming west now followed the tracks of the Mormon party over the S- Carson pass route over the Sierra, which comes out at Mormon Island. They were heading from Mormon Island and the subsequent forty niners, the forty nine and fifty one, the gold rushers, followed their tracks and so Mormon Island was the great first great destination of the gold rush and it spread out along the Sierra, north and south from there.

**Ken:** I want to return to the name of Sam Brannon because you told me that obviously Brannon was one of the first to become aware and start spreading the word that gold had been discovered on the American River, but he also returns to those people who were there around the discovery of gold and he comes back with a business proposition . Well, kind of a business slash theological proposition.

**David:** Yes, Sam Brannon was a great, I'm tempted to say con man, but that probably is good a term for him as he was a great salesman. And he came back to Mormon Island, where the Mormons were working hard, harvesting gold there, plaster gold, and he conned them into giving him 20 percent of the gold they found. Ten percent for the church as tithing. He was then head of the church in California and ten percent to secure the claim for Wilford Hudson and Sidney Willis to Mormon Island. Of course there was no government. California had just passed from Mexican territory to being part of the United States only days before, weeks before. So there was no government, there was no one at Monterey to secure that. He just conned them out of that gold. Azarias Smith said out of every hundred dollars worth of gold he harvested there he had to up to 30 percent, 20 percent to Sam Brannon and ten percent to Sidney Willis and Wilford Hudson who discovered it. It's a rather interesting thing that in his late life, he lived to be 84, he lived in Manti, Azarias Smith. And people always knew that he had been in California for the gold discovery. He was a very retiring man. He didn't hardly go anywhere outside of Manti, other than at conference. He died quietly in his little home in bed. And everyone knew he'd been at the gold discovery. The story had gone around that he had gold nuggets hidden away somewhere in his little house. And so after waiting for a respectable length of time after the funeral, say fifteen minutes or so, everyone descended on his house to look for the gold. But there was one person who knew that he had something far more important than gold, and that was his sister Ester, who knew that he had a journal that he'd kept all of his life, and during the period of the gold discovery and this period in California. So she rescued his journal and we have that journal today thanks to her.

**Ken:** The experiences of one man, Azaria Smith, seem to encapsulate so much of the American experience and especially the development exploration and pioneering settlement of the American West. You and I were talking about this earlier. He's an ordinary kid when he begins this great venture, or is he? Is he ordinary?

**David:** No, they're very extraordinary. Of course, I think if people learned any one thing from Brigham Young, they should have learned that ordinary people can do extraordinary things. He expected things from people, he really expected things from people that I'm sure they didn't believe they could do. And they did it. And so he was ordinary but ordinary people, all ordinary people have the potential to be very extraordinary. Could I say one other thing about the gold discovery.

**Ken:** Please, go ahead.

**David:** It would be impossible today to overstate the importance of the gold discovery in American history. And in Mormon history both. The gold discovery touched off a massive shift of population that continues still today. It literally reshaped this country. And immediately after the gold discovery, the settlement of the war with Mexico brought into the United States, into the Union, the entire Southwest including Utah, and exposed new Mormon settlements, the new Mormon theocracy, to the outside world pouring through. Salt Lake really was the cross roads of the West. And this massive movement of people over time, transformed Mormon settlements and Mormon culture as we know it today. It really spelled the end of the theocracy that they were trying to establish in the Great Basin.

**Ken:** That great concept of the isolated Kingdom of God on earth could no longer live in isolation.

**David:** No longer. Could no longer be, it was no longer isolated. It was now., in 1850, for example, seven times more people going to California passed through Salt Lake Valley than came during the Mormon immigration that year. So you get an idea of the impact of the gold rush. As it brought in the outside world, it also brought economic renewal to Mormon settlements and made it possible in many ways for them to hang on and become really established in the Mountain West.

**Ken:** And that doesn't even speak to the issue of the gold that members of the battalion brought back with them to the Great Salt Lake settlement. I would imagine that had a positive effect?

**David:** Regular flow of gold from California. From battalion veterans and from those who were called by Mormon leaders to go as their personal missionaries on contract to California and and mine gold for them.

**Ken:** And yet, with this great migration of humanity to the American West to California, we see this trickle, almost the salmon going up stream, of battalion members going counter to this great flow of humanity.

**David:** It's amazing.

**Ken:** It seems to be a great irony, how do you read that?

**David:** Oh, it's, it's religious faith. I think we have no idea today, we don't understand it all today. The depth of the faith of the Mormons who moved to Utah in the beginning. It was a very fervent millennial faith and those who were members were very dedicated to it and we have no sense for their zeal that they had. Henry Bigler could not imagine being anywhere else but where he could do his part to build the kingdom of God. Azaria Smith's a little different because he was lonesome and he wanted to see his mother. But yes, they turned their backs on the gold field. Not all of them. Some of them, the attraction of gold ya know. Let's be honest, the attraction of gold held some of them in California and drew some of them from Utah to California. But the number of those who headed back after the discovery, when everyone else is trying to get to California, is remarkable. It really is remarkable.

**Ken:** You've already, how are we doing on time ---- [first side of tape ends here]

**Ken:** There's a couple of additional names that I want to bring up. And one of them frankly is the name of a woman and her name is Melissa Burton Cory. I know this isn't a specific area of necessarily

expertise, but I find hers to be a remarkable story. Enduring the trials, in many ways the deprivations that all the dying members experienced, with the additional wrinkle of being with child. Delivering a child in Monterey and then ultimately being part of the Vanguard party that carves that new path through the Sierra Mountains. Can you help me understand from your perspective, just your appreciation for the story of Melissa Burton Corry.

David: There were actually many stories of remarkable women in early Mormon history and hers certainly is one of the most inspirational. She was a young woman when she went with the battalion in eighteen forty six, a very attractive young woman. She was a very kind and gentle and helpful young woman. She's described this way by battalion members. She is very devoted to her husband, William Cory, who was a sergeant in the battalion and a pretty special person in his own right. They later went to Utah and he died and she became the wife of...I'd like to start that over again. [cross talk]

David: I'm trying to remember, I just don't record this. I'm just trying to remember whether William Cory went, whether the Corey's, they did. Okay.

Ken: They did the Monterey route.

David: Yeah. But they went back to Utah together before he died. I just [cross talk].

Ken: That poignant story of them burying the child only three days after it was born

David: Yeah.

Ken: in Monterey [cross talk] and -his persistent cough that starts being the result of tuberculosis.

David: Where and how he died is where I want to know.

Ken: He dies in Great Salt Lake, but he dies within thirty to sixty days of returning to the Salt Lake Valley.

David: Yeah, I couldn't remember whether it was Salt Lake or whether it was at Monterey or San Francisco.

Ken: He died in the Salt Lake Valley.

David: Yeah, okay.

David: She and her husband, she loses her child. She and her husband return to to a Utah or go to Utah, they don't return to Utah, but they go to Utah. And you think about the journey that young woman made, largely on foot from Counsel Bluffs, Iowa to California, to San Diego, to Monterey and back to Utah. That long journey what it took for her to do that is remarkable. Several years ago, the Daughters of the Pioneers and Sons of the Pioneers here and Boy Scouts and others dedicated a peak in the Sierra called the Melissa Corey Peak, to put her name forever on the landscape. So she's a very special woman and as I say, there are many, many remarkable women in Mormon history. Mormon history and Mormonism is very male oriented as you know. And the stories of some of these women

are easily overlooked and missed. And they should not be. They should be remembered.

Ken: One thing that strikes me is that the powerful changes that take place almost in the wake of the Mormon battalion, moving through the Southwest, moving into California, moving out beyond the southern California area, each passing as they leave, there seems to be great transformations taking place. One thing you could help me understand is what it was like when they arrive. For example, what was the Sutter's Fork future Sacramento area like as the battalion members were filing through, hopefully on their way to Utah.

David: During the time the battalion was in Utah, at Sacramento and Los Angeles as well, there were fewer than 15,000 people in the whole state that we know today as California, not counting Indians. So this is a very empty place that's really wilderness country. It now has a population of 35 million. All of this has happened in 150 years. But Sutter's Fort was very primitive. It was pioneering in the truest sense of the word, where the people were. There were mountain men around here, all kinds of rough neck characters. There were many, many Mexicans, Spanish, Hispanic people. And I'd like to talk for a moment about that subject.

Ken: Please.

David: One of the great contributions the Mormon battalion made was to enable California to become part of the United States in a smooth way that was acceptable to the people, the Hispanic, Spanish people who lived here. They lived at the far end of a long trail from Mexico City. They had little allegiance to Mexico. They were really a self-contained, like a country in itself. President Polk instructed the American Army that came here to treat the inhabitants with respect. But some people got here first, a Commodore Robert Stockman and John C. Fremont. And they alienated the people who were here to the United States. The good behavior of the Mormon battalion really, members, in protecting the ranchers who were here from Indians and building houses and making bricks and building bridges, their industry and their good behavior really enabled the United States, California people who were here to become part of the United States, to accept the United States as their country.

Ken: Once you started names that you and I have talked about and as long as I've got you here in the hot seat, I'm going to ask you about them too.

David: Okay.

Ken: One of, I think one of the great unsung heroes of this story is a man by the name of Jessie C. Little. Who doesn't come on the Mormon battalion march, but is central to this battalion ever coming together. Help me better understand from your perspective, the role of Jessie Little.

David: Jessie Little was named President of the Eastern Mission to replace Sam Brannon. And as the Mormons were crossing Brigham Young's first company, across the Mississippi River to head west in February. Jessie Little was ordered to go to the Federal Government and see if he could he could find any way that the Federal Government could help make the move. Jessie Little headed for Washington, a young man, I think he was not more than 30 or 31. He met Thomas Cane at Philadelphia, who was quite a politician. He knew his way around Washington and Jessie C. Little wrote a letter to the President, President James Polk, that was really the most kindly worded threat you ever saw in your life. He told them that the Mormons were headed for California. That there were thousands of them

going. That there were more than 40,000 of them who would settle there from Great Britain and the president began to add up the numbers and realized that the Mormons were a threat to his dream to make California part of the United States. He realized that he needed the Mormons on his side. Jessie C. Little said in his letter, "We'd sure like to be faithful Americans, unless you force us to do otherwise." And Polk realized from the numbers of people he was talking about. These numbers incidentally outrageously exaggerated, that he needed to conciliate this group and so he offered them the opportunity to enlist a battalion of 500 members. There was no need for the troops. The call for volunteers had been over subscribed to serve in the Mexican War. He did that as he said in his journal that night, to conciliate them and to keep them friendly and supporting the United States. And this was Jessie C. Little's idea. And with that idea, without outside help, he dreamed it up all on his own, he changed the course of Mormon history. And he's one of the least known or least recognized people in Mormon history. And he needs to be recognized as such.

Ken: I have one final question. And then I'll throw it open for anything that you'd like to add.

David: Okay.

Ken: You and I began our conversation before we started talking on camera with the shared recognition that the war with Mexico, and more specifically, the story of the Mormon battalion, is a lost chapter of American history. So my obvious question is, why is it worthy that this chapter not be lost. Why should we remember what is the significance?

David: Well first it was one of the most unique commands ever to serve in the U.S. Army. It should be remembered for that. The Mormon battalion during the war with Mexico marched across northern Mexico without firing a shot. How was it able to do that? You hear today for example that the United States took this land away from Mexico, don't you? Well, Mexico really had little control over it. The fact that the Mormon battalion marched across northern Mexico demonstrated that the claim of the United States was at least as good as the claim of Mexico. And neither country had as good a claim as the Indians who lived there. And after Mexican independence in 1821, that region had been largely ignored and they'd gone back to becoming Indian land. So they demonstrated that this really belonged to part of the United States, part of the American manifest destiny. They pacified the people of California. In taking California occupation their good behavior pacified the region and made it possible for the United States to hold an area as large as California with fewer than 2,000. By their march, they opened a new wagon road west that was followed by the southern route of the forty-niners. By the gold rush. By the wagon road that they built going west, they demonstrated the importance of the southern tributaries of the Healer River, the San Pedro and the Santa Cruise as corridors of transportation. This had a significant impact on the American decision to purchase that part of Arizona, known as the Gadsden purchase, in 1854. This country never got so much back from the money it paid for that, a region immeasurably rich in minerals. They took part in the gold discovery in California. They provided the escort for General Carney going east of the trial of a John C. Fremont. They took part in events in 1846 to 1848 that were pivotal and they wrote about them in their journals. If you want to know about the Indians of the region, if you want to know about the people of the region, if you read the journals of the Mormon battalion members, because they were the ones who were writing it all down as they went. Their journals, diaries and letters form today a still largely untapped gold mine on its own right of information about the American West, California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico.

David: Was that all right? Tape ends.

Battalion - About the Program - Interviews - Susan Black - Interviewed by Ken Verdoia

Ken: Dr. Black of all the places we could start, I would choose the early months of 1846, and I need a general audience to really understand the plight of the Latter Day Saints. This has been an extraordinary difficult thing eight years for them. Can you help the general audience understand the plight of the Saints back in the early days of 1846?

Susan: In 1846 many of the Saints were living in a place that Joseph Smith had founded that once was called Nauvoo, but by the early months of February of 1846, the town was known as City of Joseph, in remembrance of a prophet that had died, and by 1846, a very difficult time in the City of Joseph. Brigham is determined to finish the temple that they had started and he had indicated that they would finish it either with a sword in one hand or a trowel in the other; either way it was going up. He wanted the Latter Day Saints to have this building as a temple to their God.

Yet, at the same time that they are building the temple, these beautiful brick houses, they are getting their spokes ready for wagons, their boxes, their axels. They are at the blacksmith, they are all over the place scabbling trying to get ready to leave the United States.

Then February 4 of 1846, Charley Chumway becomes our first pioneer as he begins the amazing exodus that will take literally thousands from the United States. It will bring them from England, from Scandinavian Countries as they now search for the right place, ultimately being the Salt Lake Valley. But at this point we look to leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that are saying "Free Babylon." In other words, get out of the United States; leave the persecution that they have known. They have experienced an extermination order in the state of Missouri.

Within a few months there will be battles in Nauvoo. The sacred temple that they had built, the baptismal font will be used as a urinal by the enemies of the church, and so you'd say in the dead of winter, very freezing in Nauvoo at that time, the Saints are off. They've moved on to the territory of Iowa. So, we are saying goodbye to the United States, we're on to federal land, they are following a Prophet, many have left behind beautiful brick houses. Some of them have been restored today, and you'd say they left the known to go into the unknown. Now notice that it isn't just men, but its families, and they have headed out into the lowest hills of Iowa. They've gone out to literally face death and dying in Iowa, eventually across the plains. You would say, "Why would they do that?" Well, the persecution was huge, and their belief that they were following a Prophet. In this case, Brigham Young was real. So with that belief and their faith in their God, they now leave what was being called as a beautiful city and head into an unknown world.

Ken: They really are as they head out, engaging in almost a series of reckless weekends Are they not in terms of increasing-like survival in the wilderness?

Susan: Right. As Brigham Young takes this group out into the wilderness, he had been encouraging them to pack food, add clothing, bedding, things that they would need for survival, but by May of 1846, recalling they left in February, and so just a few months later by May, the average person has

about a two-weeks supply of food. So as a result you could call it refugee camps. Brigham Young called them the Camps of Israel. You begin to see these little camps now dotting all across Iowa. You'd see from Sugar Creek to the east all the way to Council Bluff and then spots in between. They were camps in which they stopped; they put up temporary kind of housing. They hadn't planned for any of those places to be permanent. You'd say the temporary housing consisted mostly of just a log cabin with no doors, no windows, not even flooring. They are there just on the ground, they are temporary but they are planting food, they're hoping to get wagons that aren't made of green wood, they are hoping to acquire oxen.

You'd say where they are today, if you were looking at a map, you'd say most of them along what you'd call Highway 2 in Iowa, very close to the state of Missouri border. You'd see impacts of where they were even today. You can look in the small community like, Bonaparte, Iowa, and you can see some of the homes that they built for others, trying to earn the needed money they needed for oxen or more provisions. You can see along the way there's a little museum in honor of William Clayton, who at this point will write the hymn, "Come, Come Ye Saints." A museum there, at least one room of it, honors that experience, and people in Iowa talk about it being the hymn from Iowa that's gone around the world. And then you begin to let Garden Grove; there are still messages today, people there, Mount Pascal, and then Council Bluffs. They spread up all up and down the Missouri River waiting for the time to forge ahead, but basically what you get is the Saints living for a year in Iowa, maybe a little bit over a year. So you'd say the flight of Saints going west, after the Exodus from Nauvoo, made it to Winter Quarters, about 350 miles from Nauvoo, after traveling for one year.

Ken: You've mentioned in your first response very clearly. Are decisions being made in a sense to leave the United States, and clearly they did leave the United States? Is there a chance that a government of law had let down, if not parade the Latter Day Saints?

Susan: Yes. Many of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints could trace their heritage to ancestors that have participated in the Revolutionary War, that have participated in the War of 1812, and you'd say great loyalties - some could trace it even to the Mayflower. You'd look at celebration in the church. You'd say always a big celebration was July 4. Whether it was July 4 in the state of Missouri or the state of Illinois. These Later Day Saints were proud to be Americans. They voted in elections, they served in public office, Joseph Smith at one point even made the decision to run for President of the United States, but suddenly you'd look and you'd say, "What did they say?" Well ... time feather Joseph. In 1832 a total mob action, never legal in the United States, yet perpetuated upon a man for his belief.

You then look at the state of Missouri and you'd see in 1838 an extermination order. Alexander Donovan, another great man that served in the Mexican War, wrote to the governor who had issued this extermination order, Governor Lobe and Governor Bogs, saying the age of extermination is over. In other words, such action against anyone for any cause, let alone their belief in their God, is accusable by government leaders. And then you get in the state of Illinois and you'd see Nauvoo, a large town, and then called City of Joseph continuing to grow. These are people that obey the law, and yet you look and you'd say, "How could the governor, Thomas Ford, have turned his head and, in his own way, seem to give his approval for a murderous mob to kill Joseph Smith and his brother in Cartridge In June of 1844. Then to write letters to Mormon leaders in Nauvoo encouraging them to leave. In other words, basically indicating that there isn't any place in their state for a Latter Day Saint. So you get this feeling, free Babylon by land or by sea. You get Sam Brannon taking a group on the Brooklyn as they fled by sea, and you see the majority of the Saints then following Brigham Young on to the territory of Iowa not knowing whether they'd be welcomed onto Iowa if they are going on to

federal land. What right do they have to carve up these lands and suddenly they are going from state entity that had literally plagued there live, and suddenly the big question is, "Can we go into government land? Can we carve up these lands? Can we make these small encampments? Can we knock down the wood? In other words, it's not like they are paying for the land they are on, and now they are at the mercy of the federal government. So just the mirror stepping on to Iowa, beyond the borders of the Mississippi, is to step into the unknown.

Ken: Very well stated. In this climate with great distinction of what will be the role of government, when we step into the reaction of federal government, certainly a long list of means was used to handle the state government and the mobs. Brigham Young demonstrates yet another masterful aspect of ..., believe that the Ford can still be found from the federal government. for the things for the journey to the west. He reaches out, calls the men who know Jessie Little as president of the Eastern Mission. As you look at it, what was little ...?

Susan: Jessie C. Little, I think he's one of the little known heroes of the time, you'd think with 20 thousand, or perhaps even more people, who are homeless, I don't know, just like their blankets for the covering over their heads, as they are wondering what to do. You see Brigham Young turns to one man. It's interesting he's not sending someone that is an ordained apostle, and you'd look and you'd say, "Jessie Little, you're in charge of getting approval for us to do this to the territory of Iowa. In other words, get the approval to chop up this land so that we'll have the food necessary, the housing necessary that we can survive until we begin this amazing trek across the plains.

So Jessie C. Little won them, and it's amazing the impact that one man, who is a good man that's willing to do what appears like an impossible task, to get an audience with the president of the United States. In other words, what is our chance to just show up and to say, "You're never going to believe this, we've got thousands of people out on your land, and they are homeless, and they want to be there. We're not offensive, we are loyal to the United States. Can we have you permission? And the timing of everything proved absolutely perfect because as he now shows up and gets an audience with President James K. Polk. It's at the very time that Polk is trying to decide what to do? He has aspirations of the United States, sea to shinning sea, concerns with Mexico, and has now declared war with Mexico, and indicates to Jessie C. Little that if Little can agree that Brigham Young would agree, that a battalion of men, who are now the finest western men out there in the United States, if there could be a battalion of 500 men raised to fight in the war with Mexico, that basically Brigham Young has his blessings to do what these camps of Israel needed to do to survive in this territory of Iowa. So Jessie C. Little, the unsung hero of the Mormon Battalion, without his efforts, there wouldn't have been a Mormon Battalion. Without his efforts, who is to say but Steven Kearney and his army of the west might have not had just rode through Iowa and the outcome may have been completely different for Brigham Young and his people. So I would say any study, any documentary on the Mormon Battalion, Jessie C. Little isn't a background figure, he is front and center.

Ken: In the years that follow the Battalion's service, there were some different interpretations about whether the call for the Battalion was welcomed ... at a confusing time. But from that standpoint of June of 1846, when Brigham does get word of the potential for calling and how does he receive it?

Susan: Well Brigham, like others, the feeling generally is, "Why would fight for the United States? Basically, what have they done for us?" So I think that's a pretty much general feeling, even James Allen coming into an encampment, there was some thought, maybe we're going to string the man up and the dragons he brings with him. In other words, "Why in the world would be fight for Babylon when Babylon has not defended along the way?" But it is only when Brigham learned of the efforts of

Jessie C. Little that suddenly we get this complete 180 degree turn in which he is now welcoming the opportunity for raising this Battalion and indicates that hundreds who do not join with it will eternally regret they had not. In other words these men are about to be what Brigham Young would call their temporal salvation of those camps of Israel. Because of what they did it allowed the thousands, their wives, their children, and others to stay in Iowa and prepare for the incredible trek west.

Ken: One of the balancing acts that people struggle with sometimes, I understand the Mormon Battalion as a military or patriotic calling or a church calling. How would you choose to interpret the enlistment of more than 500 of these men into the armies of the United States, church calling or military?

Susan: It's difficult to say, church or military. I don't think there would have been anywhere close to the numbers if the men viewed it solely as a military calling - in other words, a citizen volunteering to fight against Mexico. You can't find in any of their journals anywhere in Kirtland, Nauvoo, Missouri, people even mentioning the word Mexico. So it's not like there is this buildup animosity that you're anxious to go to war with this nation. But instead, what you find is their love of God, their love of their prophet, their belief that Brigham Young is leading the church, and so when Brigham Young announces that there will be recruits, basically he's given his word. That's when you get the men 18 to 45 coming forward and enlisting and you get those over 45 wanting to enlist too. You get those younger than 18, even standing on cow pies behind friends trying to look bigger, so they'll look old enough to enlist. You go, "Why would they do that?" I mean it's such an amazing sacrifice. I don't know if there is something that it could even be compared to in the history of the United States. Why would these men do it? The answer isn't because they just couldn't wait to leave their wives and children out there in temporary encampments where there is just the unknown, whether it's the animals, the predators, or just starvation that awaits them in death, and it wasn't like there was going to be street signs, This way to Salt Lake City, and at some point we will all unite together and you say, "Why in the world would they do that?" It has everything to do with faith. They are a group that stands alone.

Ken: That's very well stated. One thing I want to spend some time talking about is the actual leave taking at this time. Any time men walk, march off to war, there's always a great point of sadness for families being left behind. The worse time men have with the conflict of knowing that wives or parents are in the family home, secure, while they go off to battle, but this is completely different and that must weight heavy, both on families and on the men.

Susan: Okay, I view the leaving as dramatic and for sure it weighed heavy on the woman and children that are left behind. They are left behind with the idea they still have over a thousand miles to go to reach their destination. It's not like they are getting in cars, planes, and we'll meet you, but we're talking wagons. We're talking oxen. We're talking food, provisions. How do you pull that kind of stuff across a nation and get there and be in safety, and yet for the men, you see them leaving, there's a dance, it's suppose to be a great time of celebration, yet with the celebration a sense of heartache. I think as I've thought about this, the men, they are off to war with a promise by Brigham Young that none of them will die in battle, and they held to that promise. They believed it, and some of them even being promised individually by Brigham Young that they would live through it. In other words this march, it will be an epic march in American history and the woman being promised that they would be cared for by church leaders. So you'd say the woman and children they didn't have hearth and home, but you'd say they had a promise, they had hope, they had faith. You look at our society today and say, "Would you do that?" Oh it's a different breed. It's a different time. It's a time of sacrifice and the woman and the children who said goodbye to their spouses, their brothers, their fathers, had as much

faith as the men that left.

One of my favorite stories is about a young man that is 16 years old. He's been out there and he's heard Brigham Young's call, "Come be recruited." His name is William. His father had been harmed during the extermination order in the Hans Mill Massacre. His father was paralyzed from the waist down, he is the oldest child, and his mother was looking to him to help take the oxen across the plains. I ... his mother's concern, "Did you think of recruiting?" He said he thought of it and basically she said, "No. I couldn't possibly get west without you." And yet you find Brigham Young stopping at this small type of home, the log cabin with no floor and no door to open and close. It's pretty open to everybody, and indicates that he had seen William there and had the impression William would recruit. The mother steps forward and indicates, "No, he won't." But that day she has the most unusual experience down at the Missouri River. She down there washing clothes when she hears a voice, and the voice says, "Do you want the greatest glory?" She describes, I've earned the greatest glory. In other words, look what I have done and look what I am living with now and where I need to get. Then she hears the voice again asking the same question. She then asks, "What lack I?" The answer is, "Let William join the Mormon Battalion." So what you get is you get is this night of great excitement, dancing, the drama, the emotions, the sadness, the joy to think of the faithfulness of their husbands and the faithfulness of their wives to let their husbands go, and then you say, but we don't quite have the 500 men. You get even a young 16-year-old young man now hurrying down to Fort Leavenworth to be outfitted to go, and this young 16-year-old, made the entire tract, then he went back to get his mother and his father, his brothers and sisters, and led them to the Salt Lake Valley. So you look and you'd say, "What was the sacrifice?" The sacrifice is huge for the young boy, but it means for the family we wait a year plus for our son to return so that we'll have the manpower needed to get to the Salt Lake Valley.

Ken: There's a relationship that develops, not just between Brigham Young ..., but between Brigham Young and Captain James Allen. Because Brigham Young probably would not have accepted this offer unless he found something in Captain Allen. ... There also seems to be a confession that Captain Allen offers Brigham Young to ease his concerns. Number one, the families could travel. Number two, that he would be ... providing for the land and the Potawati tribal area, that he would not defy any of the Battalion as it marched off, but should he fall, Latter Day Saints officers, selected by Brigham Young would lead the Battalion. These confessions you are very familiar with or at least he acknowledges them an understanding. So look, what do you think of Brigham Young's outlook towards Captain Allen? Do you believe this was meant to be?

Susan: I think Brigham Young believed that Captain Allen could be trusted. Captain Allen seemed to be beloved by the men. He allowed 31 woman to follow their husbands, allowing the ... at least to Fort Leavenworth 44 children, so you look and say, "Ah, that doesn't sound like a military unit they are putting together today to fly off somewhere for a conflict." He also allowed the setting apart of some of the Latter Day Saint men who were selected by Brigham Young to be the leaders of the Battalion, and so you see there was a feeling of optimism as the men left. The great sorrow for the Battalion is that James Allen eventually died there at Fort Leavenworth. It's almost like the march hadn't really begun and suddenly he's dead. With that change of leaders you now get other officers coming in who have been trained and you get this conflict between the professional military officer and those that were American citizens who feel like because of Brigham Young's appointment that they are to lead. That conflict will stay with the Battalion through its entire march and will cause difficulties on both sides, misunderstandings, and I think there is a good cause on both sides. You can imagine if you were a professional military officer and thought in any sense that you should step down in honor of a group of men that were fleeing from the United States, still calling it Babylon, and allow

them to lead a military action against a foreign government, a great concern, great conflict in which eventually led to feelings of hatred, mistrust, and anger on both sides.

Ken: Beyond this fear of military authority we can inject Smith taking control of the Battalion south of Leavenworth, there is the presence of a medical officer that enjoys ... and he does nothing to ease the relationship between the professional army soldiers and the members of the Mormon Battalion.

Susan: Now one of the problems you get, it's still contrary to military and perhaps medical at this point with George Sanderson and the Latter Day Saints. The Latter Day Saints believe in the gift of healing, much like the gift of healing during the time of Jesus Christ. Often times these men on the march would much rather receive a healing blessing from a man that held the priesthood of God as opposed to report to the local military doctor. Adding to the issue is that Dr. Sanderson, I'm sure that he had many medical options he could choose, but his consistent choice was calomel, and calomel many of the Latter Day Saints knew that taking that internally was what had killed Joseph Smith's brother, Allen Smith, back in November of 1823. So with that kind of tradition, and you'd say, "What is the doctor offering you so that you'll feel better," whether it is you've got a swollen ankle, a stomach ache, a headache, or something is in your eye, you'd say with that as your consistent option the men are saying, "No." They are not even reporting that they are ill. They are getting in the backs of other's wagons rather than to face this doctor that they dubbed, or nicknamed, Dr. Death. So you'd see great feelings against the doctor, and some could say, "Well, he's just doing his job. That's medicine for its time." But according to most of the Mormon Battalion men they greatly disliked, and perhaps even hated A. J. Smith, but you'd say they feared Dr. Sanderson, because they felt one spoonful from a rusty spoon, his particular medical treatment, could end their life.

Ken: I'm intrigued, how ... the medical care, but I think maybe this is an appropriate time to discuss the arduous nature of this march because within a matter of days of departing Council Bluffs, the Battalion loses its first member to illness, and disease is something that's always nearby as the Battalion makes its march. Can you help the audience understand that how ..., how arduous, and how danger this kind of march was.

Susan: Okay. This type of march they are basically going into unknown territory, they are going down to Santa Fe, Tucson, eventually to California, and they are going at a pretty fast clip. So you look at it. They are not prepared for this; especially they are not prepared for the desert. You'd say by the time they are heading out, it's not like it sounds like fun and games, but they have provision, but as the march extends and extends and it's longer and longer to get to the next place where you can build up you provisions, then you are looking at starvation. You are looking at men putting in their mouth like buckshot, small rocks to keep saliva going, because they are not quite sure where the next water hole or clear stream is going to be. You've got the issues of cholera, scurvy, just where are you drinking. Is your animals drinking right next to you. So the sense of thirst, the food, obviously you're not going to get a lot of variety. So you begin to look. You say, "What are you eating?" Cornmeal, ... bacon. That consistent kind of diet is going to cause extreme problems as time goes on as they go through the march.

You look at the heavy march, the sun exposure, the desert, the distance between places where they can get water, the water that they get there, not every stream is crystal water clear, and the lack of variety of food. You put that all together and you'd say, "This march is going to be riddled with difficulties, and then you add to it, you've got a few inhabitants along the route, they've got dangers lurking at every side, not knowing when they are going die, so you wonder and you'd say emotionally how are they doing? They have left their family behind not knowing when or where they are going to meet

them. They are seeing illness on every side and then you get the kind of accident illness. You've got men called to be, for example, wood choppers, men called to be teamsters, there are cattle drivers, you've got the accidents there, men are that are with the wagons. You've got accidents there and you look and say where is there hospital, where can we go for correct medical help, and when you've got George Sanderson as basically your only alternative, then you are going to look to priesthood leaders. There is going to be a lot of murmuring on the march.

Ken: I'm struck by reading diaries ... when ... It entrusts an enduring ..., not to the sense of giving up, but just powerful sense of loss, the loosing of . . .

Susan: Their sense of loss, the death on the march, notice no one dies in battle, but that doesn't mean that they were spared from the effects of the march. So when some one did die, I've always been impressed that it's not like they were just thrown off to the side, it wasn't like someone else would come along and find the body, but they always stopped and there was always a burial. There were always words that were said. In other words, there was a great sense of caring, a great sense of love when you were going, even at times when it looked like someone was going to die, you get friends going back, even brothers on occasion would go back and care for that Battalion member and then by the end of day or the next day have caught up with the group. So the goal was we'd stay together and stay together all the way to California.

Ken: I'm glad you said that because one of our controversial moments under the leadership of Lieutenant A. J. Smith is when he decides that he's had enough of this excess baggage of woman and children and "sick," and he decides he's going to send them off to eventually what would be Pueblo, Colorado. This completely violates the spirit of the agreement with Brigham Young that the Battalion must not be divided, there must have, you talk about murmuring, there must be some murmuring when this happens.

Susan: Right. The decision to divide the company and leaving only about 300 to move on to California, so it's not just one or two are being send off but eventually three divisions that some called a sick detachment, but three detachments send up to Pueblo causes a great sense of furry among the men, especially when the men, those that have taken their wives and children were told to leave them behind, all the woman and children would go off to Pueblo. You get such people as Alexander Doniphan stepping in, interceding in behalf of some of these men that want their wives with them. So you'd see very difficult times for the Latter Day Saints and another example of the heavy hand of the military and who they would obey. By this point when you are at Santa Fe, it's obvious A. J. Smith has claimed leadership and appears to be the one that many are looking to, even though Levi Hancock, a seventy, a general authority is in the group. He's taking much more of the role of the religious leader and starting to back off on what you say calling the military effort.

Ken: There's a change of leadership at Santa Fe and it produces the new leader for the Battalion, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke. Now Cooke is the regular army ... and I don't want to jump too far ahead when he comes to down to great respect for the Latter Day Saints, which is manifest when he's in California. When he comes on board, he's kind of suspicious of these people isn't he?

Susan: Right. Philip St. George Cooke is concerned about this group of Mormon Battalion and he isn't viewed as a breath of fresh air. He at first you would say he was viewed with suspicion. They've just come off of the strong leadership of A. J. Smith, almost a tyrant at times to the men as he has these forced marches, no stopping, and you can see his side somewhat. They've got to get to water, he's searching for the battle, he wants to be a big hero in the Mexican War, and suddenly they have a new

leader, a new leader is perhaps a breath of fresh air but he's viewed with suspicion, especially when he concurs that the Battalion will be split and there will be many, at least three divisions of sick, that will now go off to Pueblo.

Ken: The departure of the ... again another very moving statement, time after time in all the different journals that the leaving taking of these people going away. And again as the ..., the uncertainty, will we see them again? They are going into the unknown. Can you consider that?

Susan: Right. As the sick detachment, they divide after Santa Fe, then the Arkansas River, and again at the Rio Grande. As you see the three dividing out, each time it's emotionally, they thought they were on their way to California, the Pacific Ocean, the beaches, and suddenly you look and you say, "We're done, and we're going." Now notice the group isn't just the sick. You get the able-bodied men are being asked to accompany the sick and to care for them. You get the woman, wives of those that are continuing on, they are going, and suddenly the man saying goodbye to his wife and it's almost like *da ja vu*. There's Council Bluffs again where, only this time hundreds of miles away, we're saying goodbye with the idea that we will meet up somewhere some day, but where?

Ken: One thing I've overlooked is the notion of the woman coming on this train, you're focusing on the march of soldiers, but let's pick a woman out, let's pick, because it's convenient for me to pick Melissa Coray, who accompanies her husband, Sergeant William Coray. Tell me what the experience would have been like for this young Melissa Coray, a newly wed as a matter of fact.

Susan: Melissa Coray married the sergeant, William Coray. She's married about three weeks when the decision is made that William, her husband, will join with the Mormon Battalion and then she now accompanies him. The woman on the march, the plan initially was that there would be four women who would serve as laundresses for each of the five companies. At this point we can identify 18 women that actually did serve as the laundress as Melissa did. She received 18 ½ cents for doing the washings of one of the men on the Battalion march, and it wasn't her husband. So you'd look and you'd say, Melissa, how was it for her? And the answer is she would walk, just like her husband. So you think of the men walking and how difficult and their clothes ragged, and their food not the best, you'd say most of the woman, like Melissa, found ... laundry. We can find very few accounts where they're actually doing that, but they are helping with food. But you do find from some of these woman is that they would help cook the food for the officers, but invariably would burn part of it so that it wouldn't be appropriate to feed it to the officers and then they would then give it to their husband or their children. So, it was almost as if they had a little system going. You'd say for a young Melissa on this march she becomes pregnant. A baby is later born in California, but try and imagine her experience as she becomes one of the very few woman on the march that actually makes it all the way to California and then in California to give birth to a son, whom she has named then after her husband. So, you'd say very, very difficult. I for one would think very few woman with that many men in camp would view that as difficult at best, even though you'd say they are good woman, good men on the march. Never-the-less it puts her in harms way and so that in and of itself says how good the men were of the Mormon Battalion to be kind, to be courteous, and to show respect for the marriage relationship of William and Melissa.

Ken: I'm going to ask you a question and this question is really good for the experience because it such a simple question, it's only a question really a woman could answer. Can you imagine being with child, walking hundreds of miles during your pregnancy, in the wilderness, in the most rugged extreme, under bad circumstances?. From a woman's perspective, can you help me understand the

extraordinary nature of Melissa's birth?

Susan: Her journey absolutely is extraordinary. Most woman, especially if she's about to have her first child, this in and of itself is new. Most women would expect to receive some kind of pampering, being cared for. You always think of the husband running out for pickles and ice cream or of some such, but you look and you say, there can't be much pampering. They have a place to get to and they need to hurry. There is a war on and the plan is the Mormon Battalion is supposed to get there and helps fight this battle with Mexico. So you'd look and you'd say a woman pregnant, that's not a reason to stop, maybe a reason to give her a chance to ride in the wagon occasionally, but those right from the paths that the wagon was taking, it might have been more comfortable for her to actually just keep walking. So she becomes a heroine on the march, all the days of her life she is remembered for this incredible trek that she took. It's not like the men weren't featured and honored for their sacrifice, but among the woman, especially the Latter Day Saint woman, Melissa was remembered. Many of the women, as they learned her story, will name a child after her because they are so impressed with what she did.

Ken: I wouldn't say this Melissa ...she makes the walk to Monterey accompanied by William and clearly she's reached the time for her to give birth to her baby in Monterey, correct? The birth occurred and they named the child after William Coray, and then ...

Susan: Right, you get William writing to one of his friends on the Mormon Battalion trek, James Ferguson, announcing, he says, "You know I'm the greatest man in Israel," as he writes. "The reason being is that my wife has brought forth a son." You get his excitement and he said, "When she's feeling better, I will bring the son and show him to you." He now writes to this friend of the Battalion, but such was not to be. As with so many women that endured any kind of pioneering experience, Melissa will survive the ordeal of childbirth, their son ultimately does not. So Melissa, after making the long march, instead of having a baby to hold in her arms, to care for, to love, to caress, will bury the child.

Ken: I have a hard time with this one, and there's really no time for mourning.

Susan: There's no time for mourning. I mean it's time to pick up and go, life goes on. Years later you see Melissa coming back to California searching for the grave and hope to be able to find a grave to put a proper marker on it, but yet unable to find it. And so you look and you'd say a woman literally leaves her best, her child on California soil and moves on and makes the most of life. That's what heroines are made of. You don't really know the greatness of an individual until you see some kind of tragedy in their lives and which way would she turn? Would she say, "I quit! I'm going to do something else in life." But you see in her case, very faithful. She returned eventually to the Salt Lake valley, stays with the Saints of God, is faithful all the days of her life. And you'd say yet she has a great reason to turn her heel against her beliefs, her commitments, and eventually she loses her husband too.

Ken: That's what I wanted to get to today. It's not that it's just an easy trek to come to the Great Salt Lake Valley, ... to come ... but she's part of a pioneering company that literally has to carve its way through the Sierra Mountains, go across the river in Nevada, and along the way her husband, William, starts developing more and more ...

Susan: As William contracts the cough, eventually a type of lung fever, and you'd look and you say, "Melissa, how's life for you? You buried your child, you're soon to bury your husband." For her it

wasn't an easy path anywhere along the route. That's perhaps why she becomes so great. Sometimes you don't know the character of someone if their path is filled with roses and happiness and wealth and prosperity and all that goes with "the good life." But then you look at someone who doesn't have the good life and you'd say, "Are you happy with life?" Ultimately, I think, she's happy with the choices she makes. That leads to happiness, that leads to better understanding of life that leads to friends, that leads her to additional family ties, to have the courage to begin again.

Ken: The trials of Melissa are not over yet because as the widow of a Mexican War veteran, she's entitled to survivors pension. At a time when every dollar was counted greatly ... Melissa makes application for this small ... of a widow's pension.

Susan: It used to be for those that have participated in the Mexican War they had a chance to receive a survivors pension and so many of those that had participated in the Mormon Battalion, they applied and received \$8 a month because of qualifying for the widows, like Melissa. She will apply to receive a pension. Now notice we have no record that the woman on the march, even though some of them like Melissa, was signed up to be a military laundress. We have no record that she received any money for her service in that Battalion, and so then you'd say could she apply herself for a survivors pension? The answer was, no, she was not on a mustering end, mustering out rule call record, and so she couldn't apply for herself but she actually could apply as the widow of this William Coray, a man who had been a sergeant, in other words, an officer. So as you suggest she does apply, but by this point Melissa has entered a polygamist relationship and was living a doctrine that the Latter Day Saints called the doctrine of plural marriage. When she applied then to receive this widow's pension, she was denied it because of her current marriage situation. So you'd say well just a few dollars, a few dollars when there wasn't such a thing in the United States as a welfare system, social security would have meant a great deal of difference on a monthly basis to her. It would have given her independence to buy something for herself, children, grandchildren, and yet you'd look and you'd say she was denied it, why she denied it, and it's because she is practicing her religion. So it's like you go full circle, you say the Latter Day Saints they were forced out of Nauvoo, and you'd say government issue. Then you'd say, Melissa Coray accompanies her husband, was a laundress, goes to California, buries a child that she conceives on the march, buries her husband, sacrificed, people talk about her, they're naming children for her, she becomes almost an icon in her time among certain people and yet when it is publicized that truly she was one of the very few woman that went to California, everyone knows that, but she is denied it once again. Why is that? Because of her practice in a religious way.

Ken: And not just the denial but an offensive characterization in the process, isn't it?

Susan: Right, it's viewed as very offensive as if she's living in some kind of adulteress relationship that the government called co-habitation, as if you were just co-habiting with someone and you hadn't entered an official marriage relationship. So you'd see a reputation that in any other setting, you'd say could not be flayed, and yet the government flaying a character considering that this type of plural marriage relationship entered into was merely co-habituating with someone, without the bonds of marriage.

Ken: I'm not going to ask you to talk about all the details of the march to California, but there is a point that means something very special, and I see this time and time again in journal references. When the men have survived the imperial valley desert, cross the last mountain, approach the Mission at San Luis Rey, then move about one mile away from the mission, reach a rise or a bluff and look out and they behold the Pacific Ocean. To a man that arrived at this moment, they are all struck by this

powerful sense of ...

Susan: The Pacific Ocean for the men that made it to California, San Luis Rey and then they look out, they get on this bluff to try, they see the Pacific Ocean. Those that are writing journals, the power of the majesty of the water, they made it, they did what they were asked to do, they were there, they have a sense of, "We have made it across the desert, we are now in the beauty of California." They had fulfilled what they were asked to do. They have fulfilled the prophetic request of Brigham Young. They had arrived. There's a sense of euphoria, there's sense of joy, eventually their sense of running down to the ocean, finding bones of a whale, it's all something so foreign to what they had known on the desert. For many of them, California was everything, and I've always felt so interesting the first baby born to American citizens, they are from the march, they named him Diego. You'd say, "For San Diego is right down there." I for one loved the beach. I grew up in lot of beaches. Every vacation only good if there is a beach. There is something so amazing about the sand in your feet, the smell of the ocean, the seagulls, and for the Mormon Battalion, they loved it.

Ken: This is where we end the story. For hundreds of thousands of Americans that eventually would come westward in years, they wanted the end to be cheerful, but for the Battalion, it was the obvious end. You're in the land of plenty. There is the ocean, the beach, the beautiful fertile valleys abound, perfect climate, you are there, you are there first, get your pick of the land. ...

Susan: Okay. California is not the end of the journey for the Mormon Battalion, and you're right, you would think it would be the end. Just the weather condition, the beauty, the land, and yet for the Mormon Battalion it was their family back in Iowa, it was the prophet Brigham Young, it was the Salt Lake Valley that awaited them, a desert wasteland where their contemporaries are eating thistles and sego lily, and you'd go why in the world would they give up California, first there? They are making the first brick, they are doing everything kind of the first, first child, first brick, they are seeing the ocean, they are playing games, and you'd say, "Why would they leave that? Why wouldn't they just go back to say Council Bluffs? If it was just there family, get their families and bring them immediately to California and claim part of that land, and the answer is "no, it was still their religion, still their faith. They still wanted to be close by the Prophet. Many of them would then return for their wives, their children. Some would meet them on the trail, and they settled in the Salt Lake Basin. They settled by this Great Salt Lake and there they built another temple to their God. One that they hoped would last not only their lifetime, but throughout the millennium. So you'd say, "not even the marching, not even the starvation, not the desert, not even the beautiful magnificent Pacific Ocean could divert their course. That perhaps like Job, they knew in whom they had trusted and that the God of Israel was still their God, and they were going to a place that we now call Utah.

Ken: The Battalion completes their military mission before they're discharged actually, just when they arrive in California. Did a man by the name of Cooke; Phillip St. George Cooke, has survived the arduous trek from Santa Fe, which is now 300 men? These men who he doubted their ability, he doubted their resolve, he may have even doubted their religion, and he arrived in California and he no longer doubts. He said history may be searched in vain for a similar achievement. That must be extraordinarily rewarding for the men of the Battalion, who have their own degree of respect for Phillip St. George Cooke.

Susan. Right, I think by the end of the march, Philip St. George Cooke, who was viewed with suspicion at first and will he be another A. J. Smith, what are we looking at, will he be worse, worthy taking us through box canyon, you know of a desert, but by the time they've all made it to the Pacific and they are just about to be discharged, you get a sense of respect both ways. The men respect for

themselves, they actually have accomplished what they set out to do, and then Phillip St. George Cooke, history may be searched in vain for a march that even begins to equal what these men have done. The compliments seem to go both ways, and now for most of the men, they are going to bid farewell to the military. It's July 16, it's now 1847, they have been a year in, they've done what they were asked to do, and something more important will await them.

Ken: The route back takes many different forms. One group goes that is worthy of our attention. The group is instructed to wait a little while in California so they can earn money, come better supplied with provisions for the trek to the Great Basin, and they received counsel to well perhaps you can work in the area of what is now Sacramento, find some work in that area. Well they turn out to be in an extraordinary place in an extraordinary time and have an extraordinary experience. Can you talk about them and what becomes of them in the gold field?

Susan. Good. As the Mormon Battalion breaks up, you get some that head immediately to Utah, some will re-enlist in a company A of Mormon volunteers, and you say several head up north in the area that is now San Francisco, eventually Sacramento area, and many of them except employment with a Johnny Sutter and they are at Sutter's Mill. So you begin to look and you say any people that are in the right place, the right time, for one of the most exciting moments in California history, is that they are there the day gold is discovered. You get Henry Biggler writing in his journal that some kind of metal has been found and he thinks that perhaps it could be gold. You get others right in the area and the great excitement. The excitement word begins to spread via newspaper called The California Star, who's taking the word via newspaper and you say it's the Mormon Battalion. They are carrying the news back east and eventually it results in the 1849 California gold rush. Suddenly men that have lived in the east and hadn't been so interested in this war with Mexico and hadn't served in that war, suddenly they're very excited to not just see the Pacific, that's an effect, but they are hoping for gold and let's get rich quick idea.

Ken: So we have a hand full of Mormon Battalion veterans who are right who have the gold, actually in their hands? A wise man would stay there. A wise man would say that there's gold here. I'm here and I'm first in line. A wise man would stay and say boy getting back to the great basin, I don't think so. And yet.....

Susan. And yet they go. And so you look and you'd say, "What are you doing? You're not just leaving the Pacific, you're leaving gold, and why are you doing that?" Again it's always the same answer. They want their family. Families matter and for these Latter Day Saints, they want their families not now but for all eternity. For them that means covenants. That means covenants with God. That means following a Prophet, and for them Gold is temporary, families are forever. So they leave the gold fields to return to their families. Some will find them already in the Salt Lake Basin. For some of the men, the interesting thing is that the gold that they had actually been able to pan and receive, they give it to Brigham Young. That's how Brigham Young was able to purchase then part of the area out here in Utah. There was Peter Ogden and he's giving them gold for his land. In other words, we've got settlers coming; we need your farmland. So you look - not only did these men not selfishly want to keep the gold for themselves, but once again you look and you'd say, "What kind of men are these?" Well, that's what heroes are made of. They are great men that are doing something extraordinary. It's not normal what they did, and it's not normal their reaction to gold. It's not normal their willingness to leave their families to go on this march to follow the advice of a prophet, and yet they did it. They are extraordinary. They are men, there were many who had participated in the War with Mexico, the Mormon Battalion stands alone, and it's because of these men.

Ken: You talked about some of them arriving at the Great Basin, and a number of those that arrive find that their answers are not here yet, their families are not here, and then I find one of the more pointing aspects of the Battalion is that these men rather than say I'll sit and wait for them to come unto me, ...

Susan: Okay, I just actually can't imagine all that they have left and seen and done and accomplished, and finally they make it to the Salt Lake Basin, many of them hoping that their families would have arrived there first, only to find that they are not in the valley. You look and you'd say, "Do you sit it out, do you wait until they get here?" After all they are under the direction of a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and these companies that are very well organized with captains of tens, fifties, hundreds, five hundreds, and yet you look and you'd say, "What did they do?" Sometimes they are on their own. It's not like they are organized any more into a Battalion, but they take a horse, the blanket, some food, a gun, and they are off. And you say, "Where are they going?" Well they are going back to those little encampments in Iowa, to Winter Quarters, to get their families to bring them west. So their accomplishments, their sacrifice, they are unusual men, they were great men.

Ken: There is great stories of those reunions with family, and yet there's also been times, some 20 of the family members that were lost that has occurred

Susan: Some of those men returned back to Council Bluff to find that their wives have died. Some return back to find that children have died, and mothers have died, fathers have died, and so you say the reunions are always joy mixed with sorrow because time has passed. For most of those men it's been well over a year, a year and a half sometimes, sometimes longer, and so you'd look and you'd say a lot happens in that time. A lot happens in that time especially when you are out in the wilderness both ways. Some will return back to find their wives had contracted scurvy, cholera, and in Winter Quarters they are calling it the black plaque. So they will arrive back to find that they are widowers. Now they are taking their remaining children to the west.

Ken: Just one or two last details, and one of the great ironies of the entire Mormon Battalion experiences is that these men will become important figures in the southern Utah territory. They become central figures in the creation of the territorial militia, sometimes called the Nauvoo Legion. In 1857 they were called once again to make a march. This time their eyes are turning to the east, not to the west but to the east in anticipation of an invasion of Utah territory by the army of the United States, and the malicious rumors that a rebellion is under way in Utah territory. These men this time are taking up their arms to defend their faith.

Susan: It's probably the irony to try and imagine men that were willing to fight for the United States, the uniform of the United states, under the flag of the United States, and yet you look at them and by the 1850, as they now learn that Albert Sydney Johnston is bringing in an army that will be roaring down upon Utah, and you'd say, "Why is that?" Well James Buchanan has run for president of the United States, describing that there were twin relics of barbarism in the United States. One was slavery, and one was polygamy. Rather than split his nation apart, North and South, his plan is, "I will put down at least one arm of what he viewed as this barbarism. I will stop then this doctrine of plural marriage, as was lived by the Latter Day Saints. So you see the Mormon Battalion who had been willing almost at a moments notice to be recruited and to that battalion ten years later are now gathering their arms, willing to go into the southern perimeter of Utah, to set up their line of defense from Provo to St. George, to now defend say against the flag that they had once carried. So maybe it harkens back to the question, were they willing to fight in the War with Mexico for the Untied Stated or were they willing to fight because they had been asked by a prophet and you'd say the definitive answer comes in the 1850, when they then turn on literally the government, marched and done this

incredible feat because what seems to matter the most to them is their faith.

Ken: And to cross, if you will, to no man's land, a very primitive state, commanding officer second U.S. dragon, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, welcoming back former members of the Mormon Battalion, former commanding officer ... St. John thankfully comes to war. But there is a moment when Philip St. George Cooke enters Salt Lake City, ...

Susan: A little bit, not much, but Phillip St. George Cooke does enter the Salt Lake Valley, and as he enters he does recall the efforts of the Mormon Battalion, and once again, like he did in California, you see him praising the Battalion for what they have done.

Ken: The final thought. Brigham Young said the Battalion's ... in practical reality our nation has forgotten largely about the war with Mexico and has largely forgotten the contribution of the Mormon Battalion. ... that it's something that should not be forgotten. Why did the story ...?

Susan: The reason why the story of the collection of the men and women who were part of this great Mormon Battalion should not be forgotten is not because of the length of the march, nor their contributions along the way, or even contributions after. but the reason they should be remembered is because of their faith, because of their sacrifice, because of their willingness to follow a Prophet of God. It's something at a time in our nation when we look and we look at these people what they did was extraordinary and it is not repeated in American history, not repeated in the Civil War. It wasn't, you didn't find it before even in the Revolutionary War. This is something different. They are a completely different Battalion unit and they need to be remembered. I for one remember them and I hope others will.

Ken: And yet it's a wholly American story. It is a story of Latter Day Saints, it's a wholly American story and true Americanism of this story is the ordinary feelings it explored. It seemed to me to be an extraordinary American history.

Susan: Right, and I think that's what the American story is. It is the ordinary person who reaches beyond himself to do something that others see as impossible and when the ordinary man or woman does something extraordinary, any time that happens, it should never be forgotten in the United States. I think we've just come off of September 11, and you saw what you might call ordinary firemen going into a place to try and rescue others and suddenly the ordinary becomes the extraordinary, and we'd look and we'd say they are a hero. That's like the Mormon Battalion. They were the ordinary that emerge from the march as heroes.

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Susan Black Interview

Ken: Dr. Black of all the places we could start, I would choose the early months of 1846, and I need a general audience to really understand the plight of the Latter Day Saints. This has been an extraordinary difficult thing eight years for them. Can you help the general audience understand the plight of the Saints back in the early days of 1846?

Susan: In 1846 many of the Saints were living in a place that Joseph Smith had founded that once was

called Nauvoo, but by the early months of February of 1846, the town was known as City of Joseph, in remembrance of a prophet that had died, and by 1846, a very difficult time in the City of Joseph. Brigham is determined to finish the temple that they had started and he had indicated that they would finish it either with a sword in one hand or a trowel in the other; either way it was going up. He wanted the Latter Day Saints to have this building as a temple to their God.

Yet, at the same time that they are building the temple, these beautiful brick houses, they are getting their spokes ready for wagons, their boxes, their axels. They are at the blacksmith, they are all over the place scrabbling trying to get ready to leave the United States.

Then February 4 of 1846, Charley Chumway becomes our first pioneer as he begins the amazing exodus that will take literally thousands from the United States. It will bring them from England, from Scandinavian Countries as they now search for the right place, ultimately being the Salt Lake Valley. But at this point we look to leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that are saying "Free Babylon." In other words, get out of the United States; leave the persecution that they have known. They have experienced an extermination order in the state of Missouri.

Within a few months there will be battles in Nauvoo. The sacred temple that they had built, the baptismal font will be used as a urinal by the enemies of the church, and so you'd say in the dead of winter, very freezing in Nauvoo at that time, the Saints are off. They've moved on to the territory of Iowa. So, we are saying goodbye to the United States, we're on to federal land, they are following a Prophet, many have left behind beautiful brick houses. Some of them have been restored today, and you'd say they left the known to go into the unknown. Now notice that it isn't just men, but its families, and they have headed out into the lowest hills of Iowa. They've gone out to literally face death and dying in Iowa, eventually across the plains. You would say, "Why would they do that?" Well, the persecution was huge, and their belief that they were following a Prophet. In this case, Brigham Young was real. So with that belief and their faith in their God, they now leave what was being called as a beautiful city and head into an unknown world.

Ken: They really are as they head out, engaging in almost a series of reckless weekends Are they not in terms of increasing-like survival in the wilderness?

Susan: Right. As Brigham Young takes this group out into the wilderness, he had been encouraging them to pack food, add clothing, bedding, things that they would need for survival, but by May of 1846, recalling they left in February, and so just a few months later by May, the average person has about a two-weeks supply of food. So as a result you could call it refugee camps. Brigham Young called them the Camps of Israel. You begin to see these little camps now dotting all across Iowa. You'd see from Sugar Creek to the east all the way to Council Bluff and then spots in between. They were camps in which they stopped; they put up temporary kind of housing. They hadn't planned for any of those places to be permanent. You'd say the temporary housing consisted mostly of just a log cabin with no doors, no windows, not even flooring. They are there just on the ground, they are temporary but they are planting food, they're hoping to get wagons that aren't made of green wood, they are hoping to acquire oxen. You'd say where they are today, if you were looking at a map, you'd say most of them along what you'd call Highway 2 in Iowa, very close to the state of Missouri boarder. You'd see impacts of where they were even today. You can look in the small community like, Bonaparte, Iowa, and you can see some of the homes that they built for others, trying to earn the needed money they needed for oxen or more provisions. You can see along the way there's a little museum in honor of William Clayton, who at this point will write the hymn, "Come, Come Ye Saints." A museum there, at least one room of it, honors that experience, and people in Iowa talk about it being the hymn from

Iowa that's gone around the world. And then you begin to let Garden Grove; there are still messages today, people there, Mount Pascal, and then Council Bluffs. They spread up all up and down the Missouri River waiting for the time to forge ahead, but basically what you get is the Saints living for a year in Iowa, maybe a little bit over a year. So you'd say the flight of Saints going west, after the Exodus from Nauvoo, made it to Winter Quarters, about 350 miles from Nauvoo, after traveling for one year.

Ken: You've mentioned in your first response very clearly. Are decisions being made in a sense to leave the United States, and clearly they did leave the United States? Is there a chance that a government of law had let down, if not parade the Latter Day Saints?

Susan: Yes. Many of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints could trace their heritage to ancestors that have participated in the Revolutionary War, that have participated in the War of 1812, and you'd say great loyalties - some could trace it even to the Mayflower. You'd look at celebration in the church. You'd say always a big celebration was July 4. Whether it was July 4 in the state of Missouri or the state of Illinois. These Later Day Saints were proud to be Americans. They voted in elections, they served in public office, Joseph Smith at one point even made the decision to run for President of the United States, but suddenly you'd look and you'd say, "What did they say?" Well ... time feather Joseph. In 1832 a total mob action, never legal in the United States, yet perpetuated upon a man for his belief.

You then look at the state of Missouri and you'd see in 1838 an extermination order. Alexander Donovan, another great man that served in the Mexican War, wrote to the governor who had issued this extermination order, Governor Lobe and Governor Bogs, saying the age of extermination is over. In other words, such action against anyone for any cause, let alone their belief in their God, is accusable by government leaders. And then you get in the state of Illinois and you'd see Nauvoo, a large town, and then called City of Joseph continuing to grow. These are people that obey the law, and yet you look and you'd say, "How could the governor, Thomas Ford, have turned his head and, in his own way, seem to give his approval for a murderous mob to kill Joseph Smith and his brother in Cartridge In June of 1844. Then to write letters to Mormon leaders in Nauvoo encouraging them to leave. In other words, basically indicating that there isn't any place in their state for a Latter Day Saint. So you get this feeling, free Babylon by land or by sea. You get Sam Brannon taking a group on the Brooklyn as they fled by sea, and you see the majority of the Saints then following Brigham Young on to the territory of Iowa not knowing whether they'd be welcomed onto Iowa if they are going on to federal land. What right do they have to carve up these lands and suddenly they are going from state entity that had literally plagued there live, and suddenly the big question is, "Can we go into government land? Can we carve up these lands? Can we make these small encampments? Can we knock down the wood? In other words, it's not like they are paying for the land they are on, and now they are at the mercy of the federal government. So just the mirror stepping on to Iowa, beyond the borders of the Mississippi, is to step into the unknown.

Ken: Very well stated. In this climate with great distinction of what will be the role of government, when we step into the reaction of federal government, certainly a long list of means was used to handle the state government and the mobs. Brigham Young demonstrates yet another masterful aspect of ..., believe that the Ford can still be found from the federal government. for the things for the journey to the west. He reaches out, calls the men who know Jessie Little as president of the Eastern Mission. As you look at it, what was little ...?

Susan: Jessie C. Little, I think he's one of the little known heroes of the time, you'd think with 20

thousand, or perhaps even more people, who are homeless, I don't know, just like their blankets for the covering over their heads, as they are wondering what to do. You see Brigham Young turns to one man. It's interesting he's not sending someone that is an ordained apostle, and you'd look and you'd say, "Jessie Little, you're in charge of getting approval for us to do this to the territory of Iowa. In other words, get the approval to chop up this land so that we'll have the food necessary, the housing necessary that we can survive until we begin this amazing trek across the plains.

So Jessie C. Little won them, and it's amazing the impact that one man, who is a good man that's willing to do what appears like an impossible task, to get an audience with the president of the United States. In other words, what is our chance to just show up and to say, "You're never going to believe this, we've got thousands of people out on your land, and they are homeless, and they want to be there. We're not offensive, we are loyal to the United States. Can we have your permission? And the timing of everything proved absolutely perfect because as he now shows up and gets an audience with President James K. Polk. It's at the very time that Polk is trying to decide what to do? He has aspirations of the United States, sea to shining sea, concerns with Mexico, and has now declared war with Mexico, and indicates to Jessie C. Little that if Little can agree that Brigham Young would agree, that a battalion of men, who are now the finest western men out there in the United States, if there could be a battalion of 500 men raised to fight in the war with Mexico, that basically Brigham Young has his blessings to do what these camps of Israel needed to do to survive in this territory of Iowa. So Jessie C. Little, the unsung hero of the Mormon Battalion, without his efforts, there wouldn't have been a Mormon Battalion. Without his efforts, who is to say but Steven Kearney and his army of the west might have not had just rode through Iowa and the outcome may have been completely different for Brigham Young and his people. So I would say any study, any documentary on the Mormon Battalion, Jessie C. Little isn't a background figure, he is front and center.

Ken: In the years that follow the Battalion's service, there were some different interpretations about whether the call for the Battalion was welcomed ... at a confusing time. But from that standpoint of June of 1846, when Brigham does get word of the potential for calling and how does he receive it?

Susan: Well Brigham, like others, the feeling generally is, "Why would fight for the United States? Basically, what have they done for us?" So I think that's a pretty much general feeling, even James Allen coming into an encampment, there was some thought, maybe we're going to string the man up and the dragons he brings with him. In other words, "Why in the world would be fight for Babylon when Babylon has not defended along the way?" But it is only when Brigham learned of the efforts of Jessie C. Little that suddenly we get this complete 180 degree turn in which he is now welcoming the opportunity for raising this Battalion and indicates that hundreds who do not join with it will eternally regret they had not. In other words these men are about to be what Brigham Young would call their temporal salvation of those camps of Israel. Because of what they did it allowed the thousands, their wives, their children, and others to stay in Iowa and prepare for the incredible trek west.

Ken: One of the balancing acts that people struggle with sometimes, I understand the Mormon Battalion as a military or patriotic calling or a church calling. How would you choose to interpret the enlistment of more than 500 of these men into the armies of the United States, church calling or military?

Susan: It's difficult to say, church or military. I don't think there would have been anywhere close to the numbers if the men viewed it solely as a military calling - in other words, a citizen volunteering to fight against Mexico. You can't find in any of their journals anywhere in Kirtland, Nauvoo, Missouri, people even mentioning the word Mexico. So it's not like there is this buildup animosity that you're

anxious to go to war with this nation. But instead, what you find is their love of God, their love of their prophet, their belief that Brigham Young is leading the church, and so when Brigham Young announces that there will be recruits, basically he's given his word. That's when you get the men 18 to 45 coming forward and enlisting and you get those over 45 wanting to enlist too. You get those younger than 18, even standing on cow pies behind friends trying to look bigger, so they'll look old enough to enlist. You go, "Why would they do that?" I mean it's such an amazing sacrifice. I don't know if there is something that it could even be compared to in the history of the United States. Why would these men do it? The answer isn't because they just couldn't wait to leave their wives and children out there in temporary encampments where there is just the unknown, whether it's the animals, the predators, or just starvation that awaits them in death, and it wasn't like there was going to be street signs, This way to Salt Lake City, and at some point we will all unite together and you say, "Why in the world would they do that?" It has everything to do with faith. They are a group that stands alone.

Ken: That's very well stated. One thing I want to spend some time talking about is the actual leave taking at this time. Any time men walk, march off to war, there's always a great point of sadness for families being left behind. The worse time men have with the conflict of knowing that wives or parents are in the family home, secure, while they go off to battle, but this is completely different and that must weight heavy, both on families and on the men.

Susan: Okay, I view the leaving as dramatic and for sure it weighed heavy on the woman and children that are left behind. They are left behind with the idea they still have over a thousand miles to go to reach their destination. It's not like they are getting in cars, planes, and we'll meet you, but we're talking wagons. We're talking oxen. We're talking food, provisions. How do you pull that kind of stuff across a nation and get there and be in safety, and yet for the men, you see them leaving, there's a dance, it's suppose to be a great time of celebration, yet with the celebration a sense of heartache. I think as I've thought about this, the men, they are off to war with a promise by Brigham Young that none of them will die in battle, and they held to that promise. They believed it, and some of them even being promised individually by Brigham Young that they would live through it. In other words this march, it will be an epic march in American history and the woman being promised that they would be cared for by church leaders. So you'd say the woman and children they didn't have hearth and home, but you'd say they had a promise, they had hope, they had faith. You look at our society today and say, "Would you do that?" Oh it's a different breed. It's a different time. It's a time of sacrifice and the woman and the children who said goodbye to their spouses, their brothers, their fathers, had as much faith as the men that left.

One of my favorite stories is about a young man that is 16 years old. He's been out there and he's heard Brigham Young's call, "Come be recruited." His name is William. His father had been harmed during the extermination order in the Hans Mill Massacre. His father was paralyzed from the waist down, he is the oldest child, and his mother was looking to him to help take the oxen across the plains. I ... his mother's concern, "Did you think of recruiting?" He said he thought of it and basically she said, "No. I couldn't possibly get west without you." And yet you find Brigham Young stopping at this small type of home, the log cabin with no floor and no door to open and close. It's pretty open to everybody, and indicates that he had seen William there and had the impression William would recruit. The mother steps forward and indicates, "No, he won't." But that day she has the most unusual experience down at the Missouri River. She down there washing clothes when she hears a voice, and the voice says, "Do you want the greatest glory?" She describes, I've earned the greatest glory. In other words, look what I have done and look what I am living with now and where I need to get. Then she hears the voice again asking the same question. She then asks, "What lack I?" The answer is, "Let

William join the Mormon Battalion." So what you get is you get is this night of great excitement, dancing, the drama, the emotions, the sadness, the joy to think of the faithfulness of their husbands and the faithfulness of their wives to let their husbands go, and then you say, but we don't quite have the 500 men. You get even a young 16-year-old young man now hurrying down to Fort Leavenworth to be outfitted to go, and this young 16-year-old, made the entire tract, then he went back to get his mother and his father, his brothers and sisters, and led them to the Salt Lake Valley. So you look and you'd say, "What was the sacrifice?" The sacrifice is huge for the young boy, but it means for the family we wait a year plus for our son to return so that we'll have the manpower needed to get to the Salt Lake Valley.

Ken: There's a relationship that develops, not just between Brigham Young ..., but between Brigham Young and Captain James Allen. Because Brigham Young probably would not have accepted this offer unless he found something in Captain Allen. ... There also seems to be a confession that Captain Allen offers Brigham Young to ease his concerns. Number one, the families could travel. Number two, that he would be ... providing for the land and the Potawati tribal area, that he would not defy any of the Battalion as it marched off, but should he fall, Latter Day Saints officers, selected by Brigham Young would lead the Battalion. These confessions you are very familiar with or at least he acknowledges them an understanding. So look, what do you think of Brigham Young's outlook towards Captain Allen? Do you believe this was meant to be?

Susan: I think Brigham Young believed that Captain Allen could be trusted. Captain Allen seemed to be beloved by the men. He allowed 31 woman to follow their husbands, allowing the ... at least to Fort Leavenworth 44 children, so you look and say, "Ah, that doesn't sound like a military unit they are putting together today to fly off somewhere for a conflict." He also allowed the setting apart of some of the Latter Day Saint men who were selected by Brigham Young to be the leaders of the Battalion, and so you see there was a feeling of optimism as the men left. The great sorrow for the Battalion is that James Allen eventually died there at Fort Leavenworth. It's almost like the march hadn't really begun and suddenly he's dead. With that change of leaders you now get other officers coming in who have been trained and you get this conflict between the professional military officer and those that were American citizens who feel like because of Brigham Young's appointment that they are to lead. That conflict will stay with the Battalion through its entire march and will cause difficulties on both sides, misunderstandings, and I think there is a good cause on both sides. You can imagine if you were a professional military officer and thought in any sense that you should step down in honor of a group of men that were fleeing from the United States, still calling it Babylon, and allow them to lead a military action against a foreign government, a great concern, great conflict in which eventually led to feelings of hatred, mistrust, and anger on both sides.

Ken: Beyond this fear of military authority we can inject Smith taking control of the Battalion south of Leavenworth, there is the presence of a medical officer that enjoys ... and he does nothing to ease the relationship between the professional army soldiers and the members of the Mormon Battalion.

Susan: Now one of the problems you get, it's still contrary to military and perhaps medical at this point with George Sanderson and the Latter Day Saints. The Latter Day Saints believe in the gift of healing, much like the gift of healing during the time of Jesus Christ. Often times these men on the march would much rather receive a healing blessing from a man that held the priesthood of God as opposed to report to the local military doctor. Adding to the issue is that Dr. Sanderson, I'm sure that he had many medical options he could choose, but his consistent choice was calomel, and calomel many of the Latter Day Saints knew that taking that internally was what had killed Joseph Smith's brother, Allen Smith, back in November of 1823. So with that kind of tradition, and you'd say, "What

is the doctor offering you so that you'll feel better," whether it is you've got a swollen ankle, a stomach ache, a headache, or something is in your eye, you'd say with that as your consistent option the men are saying, "No." They are not even reporting that they are ill. They are getting in the backs of other's wagons rather than to face this doctor that they dubbed, or nicknamed, Dr. Death. So you'd see great feelings against the doctor, and some could say, "Well, he's just doing his job. That's medicine for its time." But according to most of the Mormon Battalion men they greatly disliked, and perhaps even hated A. J. Smith, but you'd say they feared Dr. Sanderson, because they felt one spoonful from a rusty spoon, his particular medical treatment, could end their life.

Ken: I'm intrigued, how ... the medical care, but I think maybe this is an appropriate time to discuss the arduous nature of this march because within a matter of days of departing Council Bluffs, the Battalion loses its first member to illness, and disease is something that's always nearby as the Battalion makes its march. Can you help the audience understand that how ..., how arduous, and how dangerous this kind of march was.

Susan: Okay. This type of march they are basically going into unknown territory, they are going down to Santa Fe, Tucson, eventually to California, and they are going at a pretty fast clip. So you look at it. They are not prepared for this; especially they are not prepared for the desert. You'd say by the time they are heading out, it's not like it sounds like fun and games, but they have provision, but as the march extends and extends and it's longer and longer to get to the next place where you can build up your provisions, then you are looking at starvation. You are looking at men putting in their mouth like buckshot, small rocks to keep saliva going, because they are not quite sure where the next water hole or clear stream is going to be. You've got the issues of cholera, scurvy, just where are you drinking. Is your animal drinking right next to you. So the sense of thirst, the food, obviously you're not going to get a lot of variety. So you begin to look. You say, "What are you eating?" Cornmeal, ... bacon. That consistent kind of diet is going to cause extreme problems as time goes on as they go through the march.

You look at the heavy march, the sun exposure, the desert, the distance between places where they can get water, the water that they get there, not every stream is crystal water clear, and the lack of variety of food. You put that all together and you'd say, "This march is going to be riddled with difficulties, and then you add to it, you've got a few inhabitants along the route, they've got dangers lurking at every side, not knowing when they are going to die, so you wonder and you'd say emotionally how are they doing? They have left their family behind not knowing when or where they are going to meet them. They are seeing illness on every side and then you get the kind of accident illness. You've got men called to be, for example, wood choppers, men called to be teamsters, there are cattle drivers, you've got the accidents there, men are that are with the wagons. You've got accidents there and you look and say where is there hospital, where can we go for correct medical help, and when you've got George Sanderson as basically your only alternative, then you are going to look to priesthood leaders. There is going to be a lot of murmuring on the march.

Ken: I'm struck by reading diaries ... when ... It entrusts an enduring ..., not to the sense of giving up, but just powerful sense of loss, the losing of . ...

Susan: Their sense of loss, the death on the march, notice no one dies in battle, but that doesn't mean that they were spared from the effects of the march. So when someone did die, I've always been impressed that it's not like they were just thrown off to the side, it wasn't like someone else would come along and find the body, but they always stopped and there was always a burial. There were always words that were said. In other words, there was a great sense of caring, a great sense of love

when you were going, even at times when it looked like someone was going to die, you get friends going back, even brothers on occasion would go back and care for that Battalion member and then by the end of day or the next day have caught up with the group. So the goal was we'd stay together and stay together all the way to California.

Ken: I'm glad you said that because one of our controversial moments under the leadership of Lieutenant A. J. Smith is when he decides that he's had enough of this excess baggage of woman and children and "sick," and he decides he's going to send them off to eventually what would be Pueblo, Colorado. This completely violates the spirit of the agreement with Brigham Young that the Battalion must not be divided, there must have, you talk about murmuring, there must be some murmuring when this happens.

Susan: Right. The decision to divide the company and leaving only about 300 to move on to California, so it's not just one or two are being send off but eventually three divisions that some called a sick detachment, but three detachments send up to Pueblo causes a great sense of furry among the men, especially when the men, those that have taken their wives and children were told to leave them behind, all the woman and children would go off to Pueblo. You get such people as Alexander Doniphan stepping in, interceding in behalf of some of these men that want their wives with them. So you'd see very difficult times for the Latter Day Saints and another example of the heavy hand of the military and who they would obey. By this point when you are at Santa Fe, it's obvious A. J. Smith has claimed leadership and appears to be the one that many are looking to, even though Levi Hancock, a seventy, a general authority is in the group. He's taking much more of the role of the religious leader and starting to back off on what you say calling the military effort.

Ken: There's a change of leadership at Santa Fe and it produces the new leader for the Battalion, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke. Now Cooke is the regular army ... and I don't want to jump too far ahead when he comes to down to great respect for the Latter Day Saints, which is manifest when he's in California. When he comes on board, he's kind of suspicious of these people isn't he?

Susan: Right. Philip St. George Cooke is concerned about this group of Mormon Battalion and he isn't viewed as a breath of fresh air. He at first you would say he was viewed with suspicion. They've just come off of the strong leadership of A. J. Smith, almost a tyrant at times to the men as he has these forced marches, no stopping, and you can see his side somewhat. They've got to get to water, he's searching for the battle, he wants to be a big hero in the Mexican War, and suddenly they have a new leader, a new leader is perhaps a breath of fresh air but he's viewed with suspicion, especially when he concurs that the Battalion will be split and there will be many, at least three divisions of sick, that will now go off to Pueblo.

Ken: The departure of the ... again another very moving statement, time after time in all the different journals that the leaving taking of these people going away. And again as the ..., the uncertainty, will we see them again? They are going into the unknown. Can you consider that?

Susan: Right. As the sick detachment, they divide after Santa Fe, then the Arkansas River, and again at the Rio Grande. As you see the three dividing out, each time it's emotionally, they thought they were on their way to California, the Pacific Ocean, the beaches, and suddenly you look and you say, "We're done, and we're going." Now notice the group isn't just the sick. You get the able-bodied men are being asked to accompany the sick and to care for them. You get the woman, wives of those that are continuing on, they are going, and suddenly the man saying goodbye to his wife and it's almost like da ja vu. There's Council Bluffs again where, only this time hundreds of miles away, we're saying

goodbye with the idea that we will meet up somewhere some day, but where?

Ken: One thing I've overlooked is the notion of the woman coming on this train, you're focusing on the march of soldiers, but let's pick a woman out, let's pick, because it's convenient for me to pick Melissa Coray, who accompanies her husband, Sergeant William Coray. Tell me what the experience would have been like for this young Melissa Coray, a newly wed as a matter of fact.

Susan: Melissa Coray married the sergeant, William Coray. She's married about three weeks when the decision is made that William, her husband, will join with the Mormon Battalion and then she now accompanies him. The woman on the march, the plan initially was that there would be four women who would serve as laundresses for each of the five companies. At this point we can identify 18 women that actually did serve as the laundress as Melissa did. She received 18 ½ cents for doing the washings of one of the men on the Battalion march, and it wasn't her husband. So you'd look and you'd say, Melissa, how was it for her? And the answer is she would walk, just like her husband. So you think of the men walking and how difficult and their clothes ragged, and their food not the best, you'd say most of the woman, like Melissa, found ... laundry. We can find very few accounts where they're actually doing that, but they are helping with food. But you do find from some of these woman is that they would help cook the food for the officers, but invariably would burn part of it so that it wouldn't be appropriate to feed it to the officers and then they would then give it to their husband or their children. So, it was almost as if they had a little system going. You'd say for a young Melissa on this march she becomes pregnant. A baby is later born in California, but try and imagine her experience as she becomes one of the very few woman on the march that actually makes it all the way to California and then in California to give birth to a son, whom she has named then after her husband. So, you'd say very, very difficult. I for one would think very few woman with that many men in camp would view that as difficult at best, even though you'd say they are good woman, good men on the march. Never-the-less it puts her in harms way and so that in and of itself says how good the men were of the Mormon Battalion to be kind, to be courteous, and to show respect for the marriage relationship of William and Melissa.

Ken: I'm going to ask you a question and this question is really good for the experience because it such a simple question, it's only a question really a woman could answer. Can you imagine being with child, walking hundreds of miles during your pregnancy, in the wilderness, in the most rugged extreme, under bad circumstances?. From a woman's perspective, can you help me understand the extraordinary nature of Melissa's birth?

Susan: Her journey absolutely is extraordinary. Most woman, especially if she's about to have her first child, this in and of itself is new. Most women would expect to receive some kind of pampering, being cared for. You always think of the husband running out for pickles and ice cream or of some such, but you look and you say, there can't be much pampering. They have a place to get to and they need to hurry. There is a war on and the plan is the Mormon Battalion is supposed to get there and helps fight this battle with Mexico. So you'd look and you'd say a woman pregnant, that's not a reason to stop, maybe a reason to give her a chance to ride in the wagon occasionally, but those right from the paths that the wagon was taking, it might have been more comfortable for her to actually just keep walking. So she becomes a heroine on the march, all the days of her life she is remembered for this incredible trek that she took. It's not like the men weren't featured and honored for their sacrifice, but among the woman, especially the Latter Day Saint woman, Melissa was remembered. Many of the women, as they learned her story, will name a child after her because they are so impressed with what she did.

Ken: I wouldn't say this Melissa ...she makes the walk to Monterey accompanied by William and

clearly she's reached the time for her to give birth to her baby in Monterey, correct? The birth occurred and they named the child after William Coray, and then ...

Susan: Right, you get William writing to one of his friends on the Mormon Battalion trek, James Ferguson, announcing, he says, "You know I'm the greatest man in Israel," as he writes. "The reason being is that my wife has brought forth a son." You get his excitement and he said, "When she's feeling better, I will bring the son and show him to you." He now writes to this friend of the Battalion, but such was not to be. As with so many women that endured any kind of pioneering experience, Melissa will survive the ordeal of childbirth, their son ultimately does not. So Melissa, after making the long march, instead of having a baby to hold in her arms, to care for, to love, to caress, will bury the child.

Ken: I have a hard time with this one, and there's really no time for mourning.

Susan: There's no time for mourning. I mean it's time to pick up and go, life goes on. Years later you see Melissa coming back to California searching for the grave and hope to be able to find a grave to put a proper marker on it, but yet unable to find it. And so you look and you'd say a woman literally leaves her best, her child on California soil and moves on and makes the most of life. That's what heroines are made of. You don't really know the greatness of an individual until you see some kind of tragedy in their lives and which way would she turn? Would she say, "I quit! I'm going to do something else in life." But you see in her case, very faithful. She returned eventually to the Salt Lake valley, stays with the Saints of God, is faithful all the days of her life. And you'd say yet she has a great reason to turn her heel against her beliefs, her commitments, and eventually she loses her husband too.

Ken: That's what I wanted to get to today. It's not that it's just an easy trek to come to the Great Salt Lake Valley, ... to come ... but she's part of a pioneering company that literally has to carve its way through the Sierra Mountains, go across the river in Nevada, and along the way her husband, William, starts developing more and more ...

Susan: As William contracts the cough, eventually a type of lung fever, and you'd look and you say, "Melissa, how's life for you? You buried your child, you're soon to bury your husband." For her it wasn't an easy path anywhere along the route. That's perhaps why she becomes so great. Sometimes you don't know the character of someone if their path is filled with roses and happiness and wealth and prosperity and all that goes with "the good life." But then you look at someone who doesn't have the good life and you'd say, "Are you happy with life?" Ultimately, I think, she's happy with the choices she makes. That leads to happiness, that leads to better understanding of life that leads to friends, that leads her to additional family ties, to have the courage to begin again.

Ken: The trials of Melissa are not over yet because as the widow of a Mexican War veteran, she's entitled to survivors pension. At a time when every dollar was counted greatly ... Melissa makes application for this small ... of a widow's pension.

Susan: It used to be for those that have participated in the Mexican War they had a chance to receive a survivors pension and so many of those that had participated in the Mormon Battalion, they applied and received \$8 a month because of qualifying for the widows, like Melissa. She will apply to receive a pension. Now notice we have no record that the woman on the march, even though some of them like Melissa, was signed up to be a military laundress. We have no record that she received any money

for her service in that Battalion, and so then you'd say could she apply herself for a survivors pension? The answer was, no, she was not on a mustering end, mustering out rule call record, and so she couldn't apply for herself but she actually could apply as the widow of this William Coray, a man who had been a sergeant, in other words, an officer. So as you suggest she does apply, but by this point Melissa has entered a polygamist relationship and was living a doctrine that the Latter Day Saints called the doctrine of plural marriage. When she applied then to receive this widow's pension, she was denied it because of her current marriage situation. So you'd say well just a few dollars, a few dollars when there wasn't such a thing in the United States as a welfare system, social security would have meant a great deal of difference on a monthly basis to her. It would have given her independence to buy something for herself, children, grandchildren, and yet you'd look and you'd say she was denied it, why she denied it, and it's because she is practicing her religion. So it's like you go full circle, you say the Latter Day Saints they were forced out of Nauvoo, and you'd say government issue. Then you'd say, Melissa Coray accompanies her husband, was a laundress, goes to California, buries a child that she conceives on the march, buries her husband, sacrificed, people talk about her, they're naming children for her, she becomes almost an icon in her time among certain people and yet when it is publicized that truly she was one of the very few woman that went to California, everyone knows that, but she is denied it once again. Why is that? Because of her practice in a religious way.

Ken: And not just the denial but an offensive characterization in the process, isn't it?

Susan: Right, it's viewed as very offensive as if she's living in some kind of adulteress relationship that the government called co-habitation, as if you were just co-habiting with someone and you hadn't entered an official marriage relationship. So you'd see a reputation that in any other setting, you'd say could not be flayed, and yet the government flaying a character considering that this type of plural marriage relationship entered into was merely co-habituating with someone, without the bonds of marriage.

Ken: I'm not going to ask you to talk about all the details of the march to California, but there is a point that means something very special, and I see this time and time again in journal references. When the men have survived the imperial valley desert, cross the last mountain, approach the Mission at San Luis Rey, then move about one mile away from the mission, reach a rise or a bluff and look out and they behold the Pacific Ocean. To a man that arrived at this moment, they are all struck by this powerful sense of ...

Susan: The Pacific Ocean for the men that made it to California, San Luis Rey and then they look out, they get on this bluff to try, they see the Pacific Ocean. Those that are writing journals, the power of the majesty of the water, they made it, they did what they were asked to do, they were there, they have a sense of, "We have made it across the desert, we are now in the beauty of California." They had fulfilled what they were asked to do. They have fulfilled the prophetic request of Brigham Young. They had arrived. There's a sense of euphoria, there's sense of joy, eventually their sense of running down to the ocean, finding bones of a whale, it's all something so foreign to what they had known on the desert. For many of them, California was everything, and I've always felt so interesting the first baby born to American citizens, they are from the march, they named him Diego. You'd say, "For San Diego is right down there." I for one loved the beach. I grew up in lot of beaches. Every vacation only good if there is a beach. There is something so amazing about the sand in your feet, the smell of the ocean, the seagulls, and for the Mormon Battalion, they loved it.

Ken: This is where we end the story. For hundreds of thousands of Americans that eventually would come westward in years, they wanted the end to be cheerful, but for the Battalion, it was the obvious

end. You're in the land of plenty. There is the ocean, the beach, the beautiful fertile valleys abound, perfect climate, you are there, you are there first, get your pick of the land. ...

Susan: Okay. California is not the end of the journey for the Mormon Battalion, and you're right, you would think it would be the end. Just the weather condition, the beauty, the land, and yet for the Mormon Battalion it was their family back in Iowa, it was the prophet Brigham Young, it was the Salt Lake Valley that awaited them, a desert wasteland where their contemporaries are eating thistles and sego lily, and you'd go why in the world would they give up California, first there? They are making the first brick, they are doing everything kind of the first, first child, first brick, they are seeing the ocean, they are playing games, and you'd say, "Why would they leave that? Why wouldn't they just go back to say Council Bluffs? If it was just there family, get their families and bring them immediately to California and claim part of that land, and the answer is "no, it was still their religion, still their faith. They still wanted to be close by the Prophet. Many of them would then return for their wives, their children. Some would meet them on the trail, and they settled in the Salt Lake Basin. They settled by this Great Salt Lake and there they built another temple to their God. One that they hoped would last not only their lifetime, but throughout the millennium. So you'd say, "not even the marching, not even the starvation, not the desert, not even the beautiful magnificent Pacific Ocean could divert their course. That perhaps like Job, they knew in whom they had trusted and that the God of Israel was still their God, and they were going to a place that we now call Utah.

Ken: The Battalion completes their military mission before they're discharged actually, just when they arrive in California. Did a man by the name of Cooke; Phillip St. George Cooke, has survived the arduous trek from Santa Fe, which is now 300 men? These men who he doubted their ability, he doubted their resolve, he may have even doubted their religion, and he arrived in California and he no longer doubts. He said history may be searched in vain for a similar achievement. That must be extraordinarily rewarding for the men of the Battalion, who have their own degree of respect for Phillip St. George Cooke.

Susan. Right, I think by the end of the march, Philip St. George Cooke, who was viewed with suspicion at first and will he be another A. J. Smith, what are we looking at, will he be worse, worthy taking us through box canyon, you know of a desert, but by the time they've all made it to the Pacific and they are just about to be discharged, you get a sense of respect both ways. The men respect for themselves, they actually have accomplished what they set out to do, and then Phillip St. George Cooke, history may be searched in vain for a march that even begins to equal what these men have done. The compliments seem to go both ways, and now for most of the men, they are going to bid farewell to the military. It's July 16, it's now 1847, they have been a year in, they've done what they were asked to do, and something more important will await them.

Ken: The route back takes many different forms. One group goes that is worthy of our attention. The group is instructed to wait a little while in California so they can earn money, come better supplied with provisions for the trek to the Great Basin, and they received counsel to well perhaps you can work in the area of what is now Sacramento, find some work in that area. Well they turn out to be in an extraordinary place in an extraordinary time and have an extraordinary experience. Can you talk about them and what becomes of them in the gold field?

Susan. Good. As the Mormon Battalion breaks up, you get some that head immediately to Utah, some will re-enlist in a company A of Mormon volunteers, and you say several head up north in the area that is now San Francisco, eventually Sacramento area, and many of them except employment with a Johnny Sutter and they are at Sutter's Mill. So you begin to look and you say any people that are in the

right place, the right time, for one of the most exciting moments in California history, is that they are there the day gold is discovered. You get Henry Biggler writing in his journal that some kind of metal has been found and he thinks that perhaps it could be gold. You get others right in the area and the great excitement. The excitement word begins to spread via newspaper called The California Star, who's taking the word via newspaper and you say it's the Mormon Battalion. They are carrying the news back east and eventually it results in the 1849 California gold rush. Suddenly men that have lived in the east and hadn't been so interested in this war with Mexico and hadn't served in that war, suddenly they're very excited to not just see the Pacific, that's an effect, but they are hoping for gold and let's get rich quick idea.

Ken: So we have a hand full of Mormon Battalion veterans who are right who have the gold, actually in their hands? A wise man would stay there. A wise man would say that there's gold here. I'm here and I'm first in line. A wise man would stay and say boy getting back to the great basin, I don't think so. And yet.....

Susan. And yet they go. And so you look and you'd say, "What are you doing? You're not just leaving the Pacific, you're leaving gold, and why are you doing that?" Again it's always the same answer. They want their family. Families matter and for these Latter Day Saints, they want their families not now but for all eternity. For them that means covenants. That means covenants with God. That means following a Prophet, and for them Gold is temporary, families are forever. So they leave the gold fields to return to their families. Some will find them already in the Salt Lake Basin. For some of the men, the interesting thing is that the gold that they had actually been able to pan and receive, they give it to Brigham Young. That's how Brigham Young was able to purchase then part of the area out here in Utah. There was Peter Ogden and he's giving them gold for his land. In other words, we've got settlers coming; we need your farmland. So you look - not only did these men not selfishly want to keep the gold for themselves, but once again you look and you'd say, "What kind of men are these?" Well, that's what heroes are made of. They are great men that are doing something extraordinary. It's not normal what they did, and it's not normal their reaction to gold. It's not normal their willingness to leave their families to go on this march to follow the advice of a prophet, and yet they did it. They are extraordinary. They are men, there were many who had participated in the War with Mexico, the Mormon Battalion stands alone, and it's because of these men.

Ken: You talked about some of them arriving at the Great Basin, and a number of those that arrive find that their answers are not here yet, their families are not here, and then I find one of the more pointing aspects of the Battalion is that these men rather than say I'll sit and wait for them to come unto me, ...

Susan: Okay, I just actually can't imagine all that they have left and seen and done and accomplished, and finally they make it to the Salt Lake Basin, many of them hoping that their families would have arrived there first, only to find that they are not in the valley. You look and you'd say, "Do you sit it out, do you wait until they get here?" After all they are under the direction of a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and these companies that are very well organized with captains of tens, fifties, hundreds, five hundreds, and yet you look and you'd say, "What did they do?" Sometimes they are on their own. It's not like they are organized any more into a Battalion, but they take a horse, the blanket, some food, a gun, and they are off. And you say, "Where are they going?" Well they are going back to those little encampments in Iowa, to Winter Quarters, to get their families to bring them west. So their accomplishments, their sacrifice, they are unusual men, they were great men.

Ken: There is great stories of those reunions with family, and yet there's also been times, some 20 of

the family members that were lost that has occurred

Susan: Some of those men returned back to Council Bluff to find that their wives have died. Some return back to find that children have died, and mothers have died, fathers have died, and so you say the reunions are always joy mixed with sorrow because time has passed. For most of those men it's been well over a year, a year and a half sometimes, sometimes longer, and so you'd look and you'd say a lot happens in that time. A lot happens in that time especially when you are out in the wilderness both ways. Some will return back to find their wives had contracted scurvy, cholera, and in Winter Quarters they are calling it the black plaque. So they will arrive back to find that they are widowers. Now they are taking their remaining children to the west.

Ken: Just one or two last details, and one of the great ironies of the entire Mormon Battalion experiences is that these men will become important figures in the southern Utah territory. They become central figures in the creation of the territorial militia, sometimes called the Nauvoo Legion. In 1857 they were called once again to make a march. This time their eyes are turning to the east, not to the west but to the east in anticipation of an invasion of Utah territory by the army of the United States, and the malicious rumors that a rebellion is under way in Utah territory. These men this time are taking up their arms to defend their faith.

Susan: It's probably the irony to try and imagine men that were willing to fight for the United States, the uniform of the United states, under the flag of the United States, and yet you look at them and by the 1850, as they now learn that Albert Sydney Johnston is bringing in an army that will be roaring down upon Utah, and you'd say, "Why is that?" Well James Buchanan has run for president of the United States, describing that there were twin relics of barbarism in the United States. One was slavery, and one was polygamy. Rather than split his nation apart, North and South, his plan is, "I will put down at least one arm of what he viewed as this barbarism. I will stop then this doctrine of plural marriage, as was lived by the Latter Day Saints. So you see the Mormon Battalion who had been willing almost at a moments notice to be recruited and to that battalion ten years later are now gathering their arms, willing to go into the southern perimeter of Utah, to set up their line of defense from Provo to St. George, to now defend say against the flag that they had once carried. So maybe it harkens back to the question, were they willing to fight in the War with Mexico for the Untied Stated or were they willing to fight because they had been asked by a prophet and you'd say the definitive answer comes in the 1850, when they then turn on literally the government, marched and done this incredible feat because what seems to matter the most to them is their faith.

Ken: And to cross, if you will, to no man's land, a very primitive state, commanding officer second U.S. dragon, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, welcoming back former members of the Mormon Battalion, former commanding officer ... St. John thankfully comes to war. But there is a moment when Philip St. George Cooke enters Salt Lake City, ...

Susan: A little bit, not much, but Phillip St. George Cooke does enter the Salt Lake Valley, and as he enters he does recall the efforts of the Mormon Battalion, and once again, like he did in California, you see him praising the Battalion for what they have done.

Ken: The final thought. Brigham Young said the Battalion's ... in practical reality our nation has forgotten largely about the war with Mexico and has largely forgotten the contribution of the Mormon Battalion. ... that it's something that should not be forgotten. Why did the story ...?

Susan: The reason why the story of the collection of the men and women who were part of this great Mormon Battalion should not be forgotten is not because of the length of the march, nor their contributions along the way, or even contributions after. but the reason they should be remembered is because of their faith, because of their sacrifice, because of their willingness to follow a Prophet of God. It's something at a time in our nation when we look and we look at these people what they did was extraordinary and it is not repeated in American history, not repeated in the Civil War. It wasn't, you didn't find it before even in the Revolutionary War. This is something different. They are a completely different Battalion unit and they need to be remembered. I for one remember them and I hope others will.

Ken: And yet it's a wholly American story. It is a story of Latter Day Saints, it's a wholly American story and true Americanism of this story is the ordinary feelings it explored. It seemed to me to be an extraordinary American history.

Susan: Right, and I think that's what the American story is. It is the ordinary person who reaches beyond himself to do something that others see as impossible and when the ordinary man or woman does something extraordinary, any time that happens, it should never be forgotten in the United States. I think we've just come off of September 11, and you saw what you might call ordinary firemen going into a place to try and rescue others and suddenly the ordinary becomes the extraordinary, and we'd look and we'd say they are a hero. That's like the Mormon Battalion. They were the ordinary that emerge from the march as heroes.

#### Battalion - About the Program - Interviews - Larry Porter - Interviewed by Ken Verdoia

VERDOIA: Okay, Professor Porter, let's begin. Now, keeping in mind for a general audience, some that are not familiar with the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the general condition of the Saints in the summer of 1846. They had suffered extraordinary reversals in their events over the past couple of years. Help the general audience understand just what is the condition of the Saints in that summer?

PORTER: In the summer of 1846, the saints were in Nauvoo, they were largely in Hancock County, some in Brown, and Pike, and Sangamon, Lee County, Iowa. They had had a horrific experience heretofore in Missouri, 1838 and 1839, they'd been expelled from the state of Missouri by an extermination order of Governor Boggs. They had fled east, and there were philanthropists in Quincy and other towns who welcomed them. Illinois was anxious to have a tax base, and advertising for influx of people to help with their railroads and their turnpikes and their public expenses, taxes. The Saints fit that bill, though they had very little substance of their own. Yet they were thrifty, and they were known as farmers and merchants and other things, they could get things going. And the political figures in Illinois welcomed them. Governor Carlin welcomed them. They were anxious to get a place of their own, and so they sent out inquiry. Dr. Isaac Galland was one of the realty men, the Century 21 men of his day. He and Hyrum Kimball and White and Hodgkiss and others, anxious to sell to the Mormons. Isaac Galland sold 20,000 acres to the Mormons over in Lee County, Iowa, and this on a

20-year to life pay situation, as some moneys down, some properties exchanged, and nevertheless they had a landing place there. Now also they were interested on the Nauvoo side, in the community of what was Commerce at that time. And Hodgkiss and Kimball and White and others were anxious to sell, and did. They acquired properties, first only on the flats and then on the bluff, and they began their existence there.

Disease was rampant, there was cholera and black leg reacting fever, there were things that put them down. They were already weakened, and the cemeteries were filling. You have numbers of women and children and husbands who were going down from the malaria and cholera. But the Mormons drained the area from the bluffs, they channeled the water and they made it more of a hospitable place. They began to put in their log houses, and eventually their brick houses, building up a community of Saints. And in that situation they found that they were soon targeted, that they had hoped to escape persecution coming out of Missouri, and though initially welcomed, they were soon running aground on a number of issues. As they applied for a charter, a city charter, they were granted an unusual charter, similar to Alton, similar to Galenas, similar to Chicago, Springfield. It created what might be a city-state, depending on the interpretation. And Joseph Smith interpreted it very liberally, and those allowances for a standing army, 18 through 45 state militia, Joseph Smith probably exceeded that pattern. He had three to 4,000 men eventually under arm, which, for those about them, they wondered why the large standing army. And Joseph Smith, desirous of keeping mobocracy out of the streets, was willing to go that route, and felt that that standing army was sufficient. Larger than any standing army in individual communities, such as Carthage, the county seat, larger than that of Warsaw. Warsaw may have had 320 militia, and Carthage maybe 200. But suddenly they have in their midst an unusual military organization. And that didn't wear well with the locals. Similarly, the municipal court was interpreted by Joseph Smith to mean the municipal court in Nauvoo was your nearest court of jurisdiction, and they didn't always rely on Carthage, the county seat. And this as a protection to Joseph and others, that also did not wear well with individuals. So they had the charter itself created problems.

Over a period of years, the aspect of commerce and the tail wagging the dog in Hancock County, where you have, on the Mississippi, a very large community. 1845, 11,000 in Nauvoo proper, and 20,000 in the surrounding area, as they began to expand. Politically they ran aground, initially trying to appease both the Whigs and the Democrats, but in the finality appeasing neither, and both of these parties opposing the Mormons. So that in 1844 Joseph Smith declared an independent party, a reform party, as he ran for the presidency of the United States. And there were those who felt that politically they already had too much power, that in Hancock County they were the balance in regard to the constables, or representatives to the state legislature and so forth. And so an anti-Mormon party was generated. They called themselves--no originality--they called themselves the anti-Mormon party, and they met at Warsaw and they met at Carthage and they met at Quincy. And they determined that the Mormons must go, even as they had gone out of Missouri. They had to be alleviated, they had to be sent out of the state of Illinois. And so politically Joseph Smith and his people were experiencing difficulty. Plural marriage as an undercurrent created some problem. And so it went. You have a whole series of political, social aspects that are creating problems with their enemies, and the enemies eventually took action and created a situation wherein Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were killed at Carthage, and Brigham Young becomes the nominal head of the church, prepared to take it in a continued or new direction.

VERDOIA: We could say the emotional temperature, if we could understand how the Saints were proceeding their own plight, that there were challenges in that summer of 1846. These must appear to

be dark times to the men and women.

PORTER: They were certainly dark times. The mob had riz'. There were people who were willing to initially burn haystacks, but eventual to burn down houses and to whip with hickory sticks and to eventually even kill. And as a result the saints felt themselves on the offensive. There were some vexatious lawsuits which were levied against their leaders, creating a situation which was untenable for the Saints to persist thereunder to do all that they desired to do. The Governor Thomas Ford recognized that their situation was difficult, and he recommended in 1845 that in the spring, when water flowed and grass grew, that the Saints make their exodus from the state of Illinois. He said, "I can't control the mob," and he had not been able to do that in terms of protecting Joseph beforehand, nor protecting the Saints afterward.

VERDOIA: And you mentioned that at times the Latter-Day Saints had turned to their government, expecting help, expecting the protections of law, expecting the rule of law, and yet those expectations were often shattered. Did this impact the way the Latter-Day Saints viewed the role of government? I mean was, in fact, the government becoming part of the oppressors?

PORTER: They'd become very skittish, very concerned about the role of government. In their exile from the state of Missouri they had petitioned the governor of the state of Missouri. Initially Daniel Dunklin and then Lilburn W. Boggs. And Dunklin resigned office, probably not over that measure particularly, he had a government opportunity. But he let them down. When they thought that he was going to support them in being reinstated in their promised land, in Jackson County, Daniel Dunklin bailed out. Governor Boggs said that their fight is with the mob at DeWitt, and he would not take sides as they were surrounded. When the battle of Crooked River took place, Governor Boggs, misinformed, although probably undoubtedly disposed toward his own people, felt that the enormities of the Mormons were too much, and so he issued his infamous extermination order. And whether that led to Haun's Mill, it's doubtful that the message had carried. But with the government treatment of the Mormons led them to believe, the mob to believe that they could function with impunity, and so they did. And you have Haun's Mill and the massacre of 17 men and boys, and the wounding of 15 additional. The government, the state militia, in the estimation of the Mormons, had failed to protect them, and so as they went into Illinois, and again anticipated that the government would protect them, Thomas Ford was unable to control his own militia, and the voice of the people was too strong for him, and the Mormons felt that there was no retreat with government.

In 1839 Joseph Smith went to the nation's capitol with a delegation, and with petitions for redress for wrongs in Missouri, where they had lost real and personal property, and the loss of life, and visited with President VanBuren. And he had said, "Your cause is just but I can do nothing for you." They'd gone through their Illinois delegation to the congressional leaders, and they, in the Senate, a Senate committee investigated their case and their petition, but all to no avail. They said, "This is a case for the courts of Missouri, or the federal judiciary." And the Mormons had been to the courts in Illinois and had been turned aside. And they felt that the federal judiciary would do nothing more for them than the president in an era of state's rights. And so they failed to vote for VanBuren in the coming election, and ultimately ran their own candidate, feeling that injured innocence required that.

VERDOIA: So great suspicions about the role of government in their plight, the government, state governments had stood by, even local governments had participated in some of the activities against the Latter-Day Saints, and yet as Brigham Young is marshaling his people for the exodus out of Nauvoo and to the west, he's very mindful of an opportunity to approach Washington, see if the Saints can partner, if you will, with the federal government in this western expedition. And one person that

I'm most interested in is a man by the name of Jesse C. Little, who Brigham Young sends as an emissary from the Eastern States Mission, but to Washington, D.C. Tell me about the role of Jesse C. Little. What was his job?

PORTER: Parley P. Pratt had been Jesse C. Little's predecessor, and as one of the twelve, and with the exodus to the west, he had come home and left vacant his spot. He was president of the Eastern States Mission, which included New England and the Central Atlantic states. And that office had to be filled. In 1846 Brigham Young said, "Let's use Jesse C. Little." He had been born in Belmont, Maine, he had moved to New Hampshire and was out of Peterborough, New Hampshire at the time. And he received the assignment in January of '46 to make all appeals possible to the federal government for assistance in their removal toward the west.

They had investigated the west, they had read all the material that they could find, and they were in possession of one of Fremont's maps and others. They anticipated the move, and in '45 had called captains of hundreds and fifties and tens. They had their exodus organized for the spring of 1846, and they hoped, as the government had expressed interest in affording protection on the Oregon Trail to those who were headed toward the Oregon or upper California, that the government needed to provide stockades or posts or some means of securing the people against the Indians, and securing the trail. And aware of that, the Mormons said, "Who better than we? We're already Midwest, and we're going west, and we have the mechanics, we have the craftsmen, we have the ability to put up stockades and to maintain them. And if they need those, let's proffer the same. And so they sent out word, sent out a petition to the government, that they be allowed to do that. And recognizing that the Oregon was out there, that there were people who were headed in that direction, that the British were there, the Mormons prepared a circular to the high council there in Nauvoo saying, "We're loyal to you." And I guess there were associated problems, and playing the British card that were also associated with that. Brigham Young had been to Great Britain, and there were thousands of people who were flocking to the colors, to the Mormon cause. And by 1850 you have more members of the church in England than you have in the United States. It's interesting that they outnumbered them. There were some 30,000 Saints in the British Isles, and growing rapidly. And over a period of time 157,000 people would come out, were associated with the church in the British Isles, and 65,000 of them would emigrate to the United States. So there was an aspect that the government, and in their private conversations with Simples, a legislator from the State of Illinois, and Governor Thomas Ford in his correspondence, they were concerned about the British connection with the Mormons. Which way will they go? What shall they do? Will they join with the British and make things difficult for us in the great northwest? And so the circular from the high council, the leading council of the church there in Nauvoo, was to the president to alert him that, "We're yet with you, that we're loyal to the cause, and will be. Can we assist you to the great northwest, as well as ourselves?"

VERDOIA: Little's events in Washington coincides with the outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Mexico, and President Polk is facing the prospects of two foreign powers that he has to deal with, one of course the nation of Mexico, the other Great Britain, and he strikes upon a plan to enlist 500 men from the Latter-Day Saints to form a Mormon battalion that can augment the army of the west. I'm jumping forward a little bit, because a recruiter by the name of James Allen arrived among the Mormon people, was there in the process of the exodus away from Nauvoo. Unannounced at that point in time, because Little had not been able to get word to the church leaders, as I understand it, and he appears. How was this recruiting agent for the United States Army at first received by the Latter-Day Saints?

PORTER: May I back track from Captain James Allen momentarily? When you say that this coincided

with the Mexican conflict, perhaps more than is obvious. As Jesse C. Little came down from his home in New Hampshire he went to Philadelphia, and was in charge with the presiding officer of the conference of one of the larger branches of the church. There were three in Pennsylvania, one at Pittsburgh and one at Springfield and one at Philadelphia that were substantial, and he was presiding over that conference on the 13th of May, which was the day that the United States declared war on Mexico. And seated in the audience was Thomas L. Kane, who was not a Mormon, but very interested in their western experience and their venture, and at one time even expressed an interest in going west with the twelve as he rode along. He attended that conference, made himself known, talked to Little, also went down to Washington, D.C. Little had entrée letters of introduction to vice president Dulles and to the secretary of the Navy, George Bancroft, and others. Kane, a very astute politician in his own state, along with his father, John, recognized an opportunity and acquainted him with Amos Kendall, acquainted him with Marcey, the secretary of war, acquainted him with the president of the United States, and opened an opportunity for him through Amos Kendall to visit with the president of the United States, James K. Polk. And in Polk's private diaries he talks about conciliating the Mormons, in their flight to the west. And again, this is that problem of, "Will they join with any enemy, whether they be the Mexicans or the British?" The Russians were out of it by that time, and it was openly, he said to Jesse C. Little, "What is your disposition?" And Little pledged his loyalty and that of the Saints. And he did so in writing as well as verbally to the president of the United States, and Kane is there to help carry dispatches, as it turns out, to Ft. Leavenworth. And Kane and Little, the president of the United States initially said that we'll send a thousand Mormons into this fray, and then he cut it down, on consideration, to approximately 500, and thought that it would be best to attach them, as they were in the middle west, to the army of the west with Colonel Hansen to be, General Kearney, Steven W., who was operating out of Leavenworth, and given instructions to capture Santa Fe, and to enlist a thousand men from among the Missourians, horse troops, and also from among the Mormons, and he had his own first dragoons. So this was his strike force. And Little accompanied Kane as far as the Mississippi and the mouth of the Missouri. He went north to Nauvoo to counsel with the Saints there and the committee on removal and get the word out across Iowa, where the Saints were spread. And while Kane went on and delivered his dispatches to Colonel Kearney, who then issued his orders to one of his senior officers, who was Captain James Allen of the first dragoon, and told him to recruit the Mormons and gave him the conditions on which those 500 men would be recruited.

VERDOIA: And so Captain Allen arrived, I believe he first arrived in Mount Pisgah, and he appears unexpectedly, and says, "I'm here with an offer from the United States." What was the initial reaction?

PORTER: He magically appeared at Mount Pisgah, which was one of the garden, the bread baskets of Mormonism, where they were prepared subsequently to sow their wheat and to have a way station there and to harvest and to help supply. He had with him five dragoons and the wagon, he also published a circular for the Saints and made personal announcement of it, that he was there to recruit for the Mexican War, anticipated raising a battalion, that he would be the senior officer, and that the Mormons could choose among their people the officers that would staff, ostensibly, the five companies that would be raised, both the officers and non-commissioned officers. And this was his plea to them. I'm sure that he thought he was hitting an advance camp, which he was, but it wasn't the center of the universe. The center of the universe was at Council Bluffs with Brigham Young and the high council and his counselors, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards and Uncle John Smith and all the rest that were there at that point. So they couldn't say, "Yes, we accept your offer," they could only direct him, and also send a quick messenger to tell Brigham Young that he was en route.

VERDOIA: I would imagine the success of the recruiting adventure, we really have to say, depends on the measures that Brigham Young takes of this Army captain, Captain Allen. From your reading, from

your understanding, it seems that these two men found common ground, and areas for mutual respect.

PORTER: They certainly did. The initial reaction at Pisgah was, "Oh, no, here comes the military, and they may be looking for state arms." Jose Astell, who had been the chief of police in Nauvoo, rather than give back all the state muskets, kept 40 of them, and so he was a little bit worried that perhaps these people represented officialdom and were policing up some of the arms, he was concerned about the government. It was said that in Nauvoo that they were going to impede the progress of the Saints, and not let an armed group, which the Mormons would have their personal arms, and they had had the militia there, which ostensibly still existed in the form of the Nauvoo Legion from a body count. The government supposedly was going to stop the Mormons from invading at that time a foreign government, and at least those were the rumors that were floating around. And so they looked with, Jose Astell looked with some hostility, the other Saints with him at Pisgah, Wilford Woodruff happened to be there, and in his journal he journalizes, and said, "We don't trust the government that much." And so Wilford Woodruff sent the messenger that warned President Young that he was coming. But Captain Allen found his audience with Brigham Young, in private and with the high council, and Brigham Young, in conferring with his people made some interesting choices. And you say he got along well with Captain Allen, who he found to be a fair-minded man, and Captain Allen has such a type of personality that is winsome, he was congenial and genuine, and the soldiers will later go on to extol his virtues, and feel that he was one officer who listened to them and had a feel for them and a feel for their families, and a feel for their condition, and so he and Brigham Young got along very well, and Brigham Young weighed the issues with his council, and the promises of Captain Allen. There's a promise of some moneys, and they're starved for moneys. There is a promise of clothing allotment, as well as their annual pay, and some of that in advance, and definitely the clothing allowance in advance. And \$42 per man for clothing amounts to \$21,000. And so there will be those who pledged their moneys, and their moneys are sent back from Leavenworth, and subsequently from Santa Fe. There are drafts, military drafts and orders for moneys that are going to be sent back to assist the saints in their route. And Brigham Young said that money is at stake here, Captain Allen promised them their accouterments, their arms, and they're not issuing uniforms because they don't take it out in uniforms, save for some who were pretty rag tag, and they bought pantaloons or bought some other things from the other quartermaster. But a lot of their money is diverted to friends and family and the church. But they're able to keep their arms and accouterments at the end of their year's service. The promise is that they will be able to winter on Pottawattamie lands in Iowa and Omaha lands in the unorganized Indian territory on the other side, the Nebraska side.

VERDOIA: Let me stop you right there and say, why was that so important?

TAPE MB-7

VERDOIA: Why was the issue of being able to stay on Pottawattamie land important? Why does Brigham say, "This is something that's important to us"?

PORTER: The United States government had a policy of moving the Indians to unorganized Indian territory, and if one were to see a colored map, a code colored map of the Indians, which I have seen of the period, the Indians are stacked up like cord wood all along the area, the Shawnee and the Delaware, on up to the Omahas and the Otos and others. The Mormons are traveling in an area where the Pottawattamie still exist, and they're still in form in Iowa territory, and the Omahas on the other

side, and I mentioned the Otos, and the Shawnees to the north. They're quite cognizant of the government agencies and the government farmers, and the government suppliers who are concerned about anyone staying and working among the Indians, or being among them.

It's imperative, with the recruitment of 500 men, you suddenly lose all kinds of bullwhackers and people off the wagon box, and your tradesmen and craftsmen, many of them are suddenly taken out of the lineup, and they are marched off to Leavenworth. These were the people who would have driven wagons in a flying wedge that very year if the Mormons had kept up with it. Their initial desire was to send a group of men into the great salt basin and to establish an area for the Saints as a landing place. They were delayed time and time again coming across, from February, not until June 15th are they really at the river, at the Missouri, and their time has been lost in fighting the mud and fighting the problems of disorganization among the organization, and of moving their equipment and people there. And so they may have been on the verge of needing to stop and wintering through. And this cemented it. They saw that they really could not go on, and that they needed to go into a winter quarters situation. And so their relationships with the Indians became very important to them. And the good captain is saying, "I am the representative of the United States and of the president, and you'll be able to winter through, your people will be able to stay here." And that proved to be the case. They, the Mormons in Iowa, for instance, were there until 1852 under Orson Hyde, and 1853, and some beyond after the fact who bed down and stay on. But there are Mormons being shuttled to the west in 1852 by Orson Hyde, and they have their opportunity to winter through.

VERDOIA: We mentioned briefly, I talked about the reaction of some people, before Brigham Young intervened and became kind of a recruiting advocate. And you mentioned a few people that would have been opposed to the notion of recruiting for the army. I don't want to over-emphasize this, but I do want to focus in on that. Because from the standpoint of, if I would have been in that group, and the government, after what I had experienced, would come to me and say, "Guess what, we've decided to allow you to enlist," I would have said, "Take a hike. You know, look at what you've done to me." There must have been that sentiment of people saying, "We have suffered so much and you stood by and now you need us?"

PORTER: Probably a general sentiment if the truth were known. They were leaving the states, and they recognized that, and they were going off where they could practice their religion, and this without impediment of the past. It's an interesting dichotomy, however. If you take Thomas Karren out of Liverpool, England, with a wife and five children who now volunteers to march with the church, he's doing it, not out of allegiance to the president of the United States, President Polk, nor his needs in the Mexican war, he's doing it out of the invitation of his file leader, Brigham Young, and others, and he very plainly states that in his journal, "This is why I'm doing it, in compliance with a request." I'm sure that getting 500 men up across a 2000-mile stretch is difficult to do, and you can't always get all the way to Nauvoo, though you send correspondence to get people up in time to participate, and so you're taking what's available. And he was available and he was asked, and he said, "I'll go." The same for James S. Brown, James Steven Brown, but for a different reason. He's not saying just solely to appease Brigham Young, but he said, "I remember stories of the revolution, and stories of the Indian wars and 1812." There's an element of patriotism in the man, and he signs up because he feels it is his duty in a time in which the United States has been attacked by a foreign power. And so it's not solely his response to Brigham Young that took him south. And there were others who would have been in a similar condition. But primarily they feel that the government has merely come to use them up, to take 500 of their best men, and to take them out of the lineup, and to, in effect, do the Saints in.

VERDOIA: From the standpoint of the men and women, then, and as you kind of alluded to, there

seems to be a sense of a great affection for the principle of the United States, of the government, of the Constitution, of the rule of law. There's this great loyalty to that principle. But less its practical reality of what government has been for them; is that correct?

PORTER: Very true. I think inbred they keep repeating it, and saying the Constitution is a valid document, and just men in office have a cause. And so they're looking for a good government, and they're looking to support the people of the past. And as you read the papers of Joseph Smith, you'll find that he talks about Jefferson and Washington and Adams, and other sterling individuals from the past. Joseph Smith was weaned with grandparents who had participated in the Indian war and in the revolution. He had a grandfather who was at Fort Edwards and Fort Ticonderoga, and he knew others who had participated in the war of 1812. There was an element of patriotism that ran very deep among these people, so far as valid government was concerned. Individuals they were very unhappy with, but for, as for the government itself, when well run, they were in total support.

VERDOIA: The battalion is raised in relatively short order, I mean a little bit longer than some people may have expected, but you said across a 2000-mile line it is raised in relatively quick order. And one of the things that Brigham Young does that I take note of, is he calls the leaders of the battalion, the men that are being elected to the offices of captain and lieutenant and sergeant, he calls them together and he gives them special instructions before the battalion marches. What's the nature of that instruction? What did Brigham Young want these officers to be?

PORTER: The recruiting process is 21 days. Captain Allen had hoped to do it in seven or nine at the outside, but the time is there, the help is there, and Brigham Young himself goes out with the recruiting sergeant, and visits the trail and goes as far as Mount Pisgah and sends a letter on to Garden Grove, and a correspondence with Nauvoo saying, "Come join the ranks." And so he's 100 percent behind it, as he sees it will really benefit them. And just in passing, one of those items of benefit was, "We will be there first," and that became very important to Brigham Young. In a new land, a new situation, where Mormons, several hundred of them, who would have their way to the west paid for, would be the first in that land. And there would be some priority that would accrue from that. The recruiting took place on the 16th of July, and four and a half companies were raised at that time, and company E would soon fill out. But on that occasion he met with the officers and non-commissioned officers, and for him religion was important, he said, "All of your officers have been in the temple except three." And so there's a religious aspect to all of this. He's saying there's a special blessing from on high that has been commended to your officers. And then he talked to them individually about being fathers to their men. And if you've had opportunity to serve in the military, with Sergeant Romakli, his first sergeant, you know that he was not always a father to the men in that sense, giving them scotch blessings nevertheless. But officers and men working together in a common ground, and he said that the privates were as good as the officers when they obey orders and do what is expected of them. He told them to dress neatly, to put on a vest and a coat, which might have been rather rugged among the saguaro cactus, but nevertheless to dress neatly as occasion demanded, and to act civilly wherever they went. He also invited them not to have discord with the Mexicans, or with people of other religions, and to not buttonhole them with Mormonism. That he was very anxious to not press their religion on others, and he said take your copies of the Book of Mormon with you, and utilize them. And he gave them an admonition to burn any playing cards, because I'm sure that could lead to discord or a row among men and so forth. But he gave them good, fatherly advice to the non-commissioned officers, and sent them off to be fathers to their men.

VERDOIA: And he also said, at about the same time, that, "If you stay true to your faith and for your

teachings, no harm will come to you." Did he not?

PORTER: He mentioned that, and the men mention it in their journals, and also in their trek and at the conclusion of the trek, and indicate that Brigham Young's word was good. There are a few amendments that might be added to that. I don't think that he could promise that everyone would come back alive. He'll have 23 men who died on active duty, and this for a variety of causes. And on the exodus back to Utah, and back to the Missouri as they made their return out of California, Henry Hoyt dies just when he's about to cross the Sierra-Nevada mountains, and he's gone. And Ezra Hela Allen and Henderson Cox and a man by the name of Daniel Browett, who are the point men for a group of the returning veterans, divided themselves into groups of 100, two hundred, they'd appointed their captains, and two fifties, and numbers of ten. And as these men, point men went out, anxious to find a way and be on their way, they were beset by Indians and killed. And there are those who came behind found them after the fact, after they'd been buried in shallow graves. So the guarantee of no loss of life, there are those who are going to die on active duty and in the return.

But so far as warring was concerned, their commander in chief, Steven Kearney, with his hundred dragoons and their mules, who were cutting a swift path out of New Mexico and along the Salt River and getting into California, and Kearney had been appointed the governor of California and also the commanding officer of the military forces there, the president and the congress had given him that power. And he felt that he needed to be there in the waning moments as they were going against Andre and Peopeka, as they closed out the campaign. And he ran pell-mell at San Pasquale into a hail storm in which he was lanced two or three times, and he lost Lieutenant Moore, for whom Fort Moore at Los Angeles was to be named, and others of his command. And it takes sailors and marines out of San Diego to come up and come to his rescue, and to save him from some very proficient Californos. And so there's danger on the trail, and there was at Tucson, if the Mexican garrison of 200-plus decided to fight, if they had brought in other garrisons from Sonora, which was a prospect, they could have overwhelmed, I think numerically, the Mormon host, and done some real damage. And Sergeant Tyler, who chronicles their experience in his publication, he said that, "One of our greatest fears was that as we were strung out that the enemy, who, they were excellent horsemen, skilled horsemen, with their lances or with their munitions, could have come in and really decimated their line if they'd hit them at the right time. But their group took Tucson, and Comanduram, the commander of that post, moved off and went down to San Xavier Del Bac and stayed out of the way with his people until the Mormons had taken a little grain and not much else and left that outpost against the Comanches. They had a nice scare in the evening in which the outguard saw too many Mexicans coming into the community and set up an alarm, and so everyone was out, and they slept on their weapons, and there were a lot of fast-beating hearts. They could have gotten into a little fire fight. Some of them did get into a little fire fight, and this with the Californos coming through Cohen pass and other passes through the Williams ranch and other ranches to the east of Fort Moore. And Lieutenant Samuel Thompson took a group of the battalion and some others out to impede the progress of any Californos or Indians coming through, and any depredation, and they found a group of Indians and killed six of them. And two of their number were wounded, but not killed. And so there were some who faced the cannon's mouth, the musket's mouth, and arrows, which seemed to be the weapon of choice, but the men came through. They didn't have- - They weren't in any pitched battle.

VERDOIA: We've moved ahead talking about some of the incidents along the trek, but as the leave-taking is made, as the battalion is preparing to march off under the command of Captain Allen towards Leavenworth, it's always poignant when a man goes to war, accepts the uniform of his country and leaves his family behind. But in this sense, it seems to be even more poignant, because these men are not leaving their families in tidy, secure homes. They're leaving them literally in the middle of the

wilderness. That must have a profound impact on the families.

PORTER: The impact probably hadn't been realized heretofore. I'll put in a plug for a fellow historian and colleague, Shirley Mains. 500 wagons stood still. You have 500 men marching off, there are ostensibly 500 households that are left without their husband or father or brother or whatever. There are numbers of people who are left behind, and their story really hasn't been told, and so Shirley takes their story and takes their biographies one by one. There are some women who went with the battalion. The army at that time allowed laundresses, four to a company, which, with five companies, are 20 laundresses who are permitted. The wives of officers, if they provided transportation, were also invited to go, and due to Captain Allen making some special concessions, there were wives of officers and children. Probably 35 women, including the laundresses, and some 42 children are marching with this unit. And so this, there are some who are there, and more who are left behind. But it is an interesting commentary on those who were left behind, because some of them die and their men folk come back and they're not there. And some of the women lose their husbands on the trail. I've mentioned Ezra Hela Allen, who died at the hand of Indians in the Sierra-Nevada. His wife is waiting patiently for the man who never comes. And so her life is rearranged, and she marries another, Joel Ricks, and is buried in the Logan cemetery under another name.

VERDOIA: There is, at the time of marching out, some certain bit of confusion about what is the destination of these people as they move to the west. Is it going to be California? Could it be even Vancouver Island, the great basin? And judging from some of the journals there's an uncertainty about whether the battalion will be told to stay in California. So at that time, is there an uncertainty? There seems to be an absence of a clear vision of where the saints will be in the American west.

PORTER: Yes, things weren't entirely crystal clear for them. They had made as many inquiries as they could of those who were trafficking back and forth, and continued to do so, picking out the mountain men or people returning, the fur men, the trappers, as they go along. Before leaving they tried to get as many maps of the region as they can. They had also made previous inquiries into Wisconsin and Kentucky, into Texas. They were looking, and even admonished by Steven Douglas in regard to Vancouver Island, and British America, North America. Upper California, where does that extend? New Mexico is a northern province. California, upper, lower and upper California are provinces of Mexico. And where are we going? There seemed to be a general feeling that the great basin was the place, and the Rocky Mountains. And as they approach that they're talking to Jim Bridger and others. They're talking to people about the Bear Lake valley. They're talking about Willow Valley, or Cache Valley. They're trying to find the right place. And Brigham Young said that he had a consensus of where that was, and he's sending point men ahead with Orson Pratt and others as they get into their final approach and are following those, the trail of the Donner party and the Hastings cutoff into the valley. And as he came into the valley, Wilford Woodruff affirmed, he said, "This is the right place." And they had already sent those point people ahead to do a little diversion of City Creek, and to do some planning and to get in some buckwheat and some potatoes and parsnips. They knew they had to get something in the ground pretty quick, whatever that circumstance was, and then it's confirmed for them, and Brigham Young says, "This is where the tent of Israel will settle down." And so this becomes the headquarters.

VERDOIA: The battalion marches off, actually within a matter of days they lose the first member of the battalion to illness as they are marching south. But a loss that I want to pay some attention to is after a brief period of training and outfitting at Leavenworth, the battalion marches off, but captain, now colonel of volunteer, James Allen stays behind, and Allen dies. What's the impact of the death of

Allen on the battalion?

PORTER: Samuel Boley is the first down as they're taking that first 160-mile leg down at Leavenworth. And then at Leavenworth congestive fever took Allen. He did all that he could, he was there for the passing out of the muskets, and trying to direct traffic, and sends out companies A, B, C, and then C and D and E, and says, "I'll join you shortly," but he never does. He's now that the seventh man in on officer row A in the cemetery there at Ft. Leavenworth. And the word reached the men about the 26th of August, or thereabout. There were those Lieutenant Pace and others who have stayed behind and convey the word to them, and they know that he's down. They organized a memorial to him, and actually had a memorial service for their fallen friend. And that's where you get a lot of eulogizing of the man as being this fair-minded individual, and that he really did respect the men and their wives and their condition. And so they really lamented the fact of any transition, but they thought that they knew the course of transition.

VERDOIA: They thought it was going to devolve to their own number.

PORTER: Yes. Now Lieutenant Colonel Allen, with the recruitment of the fourth company had become lieutenant colonel automatically at Council Bluffs, he had promised them that their senior officer, who is captain Jefferson Hunt, would be his replacement if anything happened. And that was debated at the time, and debated in the sense that the officers confirmed that that was the case, and then they go on, they continue to march. And by the 29th Lieutenant A. J. Smith, a West Pointer, and a career officer, has come out from Ft. Leavenworth, Major Wharton and others encouraging him, the commander of the post, and accompanied by another West Pointer, Lieutenant Stoneman, and Dr. Sanderson, the famous doctor death under other circumstances, they are there to confirm that really lieutenant A. J. Smith should be the commander of the troops.

Tape MB-8.

VERDOIA: All right, so let's see him as with what we were just talking about. The arrival of Lieutenant Smith almost seems to the men of the battalion to be a betrayal of one of the fundamental promises that had been made, that the beloved Captain Allen is gone, or at least the trusted Captain Allen is gone, and you know, many members of that battalion thought they would be able to provide their own leadership for the continuation of the march.

PORTER: Jefferson Hunt was to be their leader, that was clearly delineated by Captain, now Colonel Allen. And Brigham Young understood that, his council understood that, the men understood that. And so initially they're willing to carry that out. But now he's on the scene, there are those among them who say, here is a trained officer who has been to West Point, and will become a lieutenant and then a captain, and then in the civil war he becomes a major general. He obviously had leadership ability, and yet he didn't always exercise the best judgment. And in terms of introducing himself as their leader, in terms now of introducing Sanderson to the scene as the doctor who fills them will calomel and arsenic, they attribute that to him. Down the line they'll attribute separation to him, as there's a parting of the ways with the first group, the sick detachment who are sent to Pueblo to winter through. And his extended marches in order to get to Santa Fe, as he learns from General Kearney that they are en route, and that if the Mormon Battalion wishes to join them they must hurry on. And so they take the most able-bodied people and the wagoners, and even Dr. Sanderson, who should have been left among the sick and the helpless, they hustle off to Santa Fe. And Lieutenant A. J. Smith did not endear himself to the men.

VERDOIA: We brought up the name of Dr. Sanderson, so let's explore that too. There seems to be not just the primitive states of medicine at that time, but also a more fundamental instruction that comes from Brigham Young warning the men against some of the mineral medicines that exist at the time, the chemicals that might be poured in the body, and warning them not to fall victim to that. Help me understand how the members of the battalion react to Dr. Death, Dr. Sanderson?

PORTER: It probably goes way back, and I would be taking that too far if I were to include the Prophet Joseph Smith's brother Alvin, who died an overdose of calomel and arsenic way back in 1823. And I find William Smith in the Wasp, or his publication, that he talks about it later on, that, stay away from these mineral medicines. And Brigham Young had picked up on it certainly, and admonished the men. The assistant surgeon, or assistant medical officer, physician, was Dr. McIntire who was a Mormon, and also a botanical man who, using herbs, was the means of curing. And Dr. Sanderson, true to the mineralists of the day, was doing what others did, and that was with \_\_\_\_\_ and giving them calomel and arsenic because as a general means of taking care of individuals. And the men had a distinct distaste for that, many of them, and as more and more of them became ill, and died of the effects, Alva Phelps and others, they were not at all sure that he was not the cause of those deaths. And his general attitude toward the Mormons was one of, a prejudiced one. He had come out of Missouri as a contract doctor, and was obviously acquainted with certain aspects of the Mormon experience. At any rate, he did not treat them well. And when private wagons were employed and there were twelve private wagons along to help carry the sick he made them unload, and made them come through his line and made sure that they swallowed.

VERDOIA: Just for the uninitiated, what the heck is calomel?

PORTER: I wish that I could tell you all the chemical aspects of calomel.

VERDOIA: But in a more simple respect, that what medicine used back then as treatment we now use today as poison.

PORTER: Used in amounts, apparently it had produced that effect, and I've seen the formula, and even read about it in the old medical books, but my subconscious doesn't tell me all the aspects of calomel.

VERDOIA: Along the route, we've got them marching now towards Santa Fe, Lieutenant Smith has taken command, Sanderson is in place, and Langdon is a representative, one of a couple of representatives of Brigham Young, comes John Doyle Lee. And Lee, from what I understand from reading, doesn't like what he sees in terms of what's happening to the battalion members. What's the role of John D. Lee?

PORTER: You have a battalion payroll, and initially the clothing allowance at Ft. Leavenworth, \$42 in advance for the whole year's clothing allowance if they desired, plus some pay, and that was picked up, that which they were willing to release, and that was their choice as to how much they would release of the \$21,000. The soldiers gave to John Taylor, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, and Jesse C. Little came down with them, and they gave donations to those men to speed them on their way to their respective mission fields, as well as donations going north to central headquarters at Council Bluffs. John D. Lee came down with the view of picking up the military drafts, or moneys that would be available at Santa Fe, and he was traveling early on with them toward that destination, and I guess you could sum up his opposition with three S's. He was against Smith because Smith was not the appointed officer, he had thought him to be an interloper. Brigham Young had thought that the command would go to Hunt, and when they sent mail, correspondence to President Young, he again

returned saying, "It's my understanding that our man will be the commander," and that's a late arrival and so it's after the fact and so passe. But you almost have an insurrection among some of the men as this very forceful John D. Lee goes among them and there's almost mutiny. He's in the process of that, and it probably, fortunately for the men and the circumstance, eventually they're able to override Lee. He was unable to create the desired change. Sanderson. Coals don't hit into that man. He felt that he was, indeed, administering false medicine. And finally, separation. As they marched along and came to the Arkansas and the crossing of the Arkansas, when Nelson Higgins, Captain Higgins and twelve of his men are chaperones to women and children and sick who are among them, too sick to go on, and go toward, advance forward and on to Pueblo where they could winter through, he said, "Brigham Young said no separation. No, this is too much." And he, again, was fighting that. And he was fighting the inevitable, as one might appreciate. As we look back with hindsight on the history of 82 men who are again sick at Santa Fe, and 55 men who are sick and make a third return to Pueblo off the Rio Grande. It is an inhospitable atmosphere and people are succumbing to it, and it's fortunate that many of the women and children were not subject to the remainder of that torturous march.

VERDOIA: When we say "sick," we're really talking deathly ill in many instances, aren't we?

PORTER: Yes. People are dying.

VERDOIA: Can we better understand just what they were getting sick of? What were the contributing factors? What was making them ill, or what were they ill with?

PORTER: Simon Tyler, as he thought back on the whole process in his logging in, he felt that the men had long been undernourished. Coming out of Nauvoo, they didn't always have sufficient to eat, and that there was not a good diet. And so he felt that there was a certain amount of undermining of health that had taken place even before that. But when you go against the great southwest desert, and as I say, an inhospitable environment, where there are long marches, and not always water and so forced marches, and the rations are not always the best under the circumstances, and the quartermaster can't always provide a good meal, and the pyramid of good food, then there are people who are going to come down with a variety of ailments, which may have already visited them in part, or which they acquire on the trail, and heat exhaustion and prostration, diarrhea, the diseases of the trail are going to take their toll on the men, and did.

VERDOIA: Tell me, as a person who has read so many of these histories, what was it like as they're on these marches, day in and day out across what we would call desert landscapes in New Mexico, in Arizona? Can you give a contemporary audience, a comfortable audience, any appreciation for just how hard it was?

PORTER: I keep referring to Sergeant Tyler, and he's not the only chronicler by any means, but he said, "There aren't adjectives sufficient to tell this story." And he spoke at that particular time, it's January of 1847, and five continuous days, coming from the mouth of the Gila river and crossing toward the Imperial Valley, and the wells far and few between and no water for 48 hours, and they're feeding the cattle by cutting down some cottonwoods where they can find them, or mesquite, taking the branches and feeding them to the animals and trying to keep them alive, he says, "There's no adjective that can describe these last five days. These have been the hardest of the entire journey." And I suppose it was because the men were totally worn down. They had lost three sick detachments, they had continued the march, there are somewhere around 335 of the men who are marching. They've been without water, they've been tested, they've been without food, their rations have been cut down and down and down, four ounces, one ounce, sort of thing, and their rations of meat and mutton that

was scrawny itself, or when the oxen die, or when a mule goes down, they gnaw on that, and they eat the entrails and the tripe. They're trying every way possible to feed themselves, to maintain some strength. But he said this is the crux. We've really had the course, and there were lots of men who lay down to die, and it's only finding water, and then going back along the line to give them a drink to quench their thirst and to bring them on as they arrive at 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m. in the morning from the march. He felt that they had been stripped and peeled through their experience.

VERDOIA: They really are fighting for survival. It's less a grand military mission than it is just fighting to survive.

PORTER: Very true. As one goes down to Mesa or Phoenix or Tucson today and goes through that country headed south, you can appreciate the harshness of the environment. Their clothes were ripped to shreds, and the further they go the less clothing they have. And the further they go, the colder the nights. And he said it was first, "It was the heat of the day, the broiling heat of the day, and the freezing nights that caused our great discomfort."

VERDOIA: You mentioned about the departure of three separate detachments, and you've outlined those pretty well. But I'm wondering about the impact of those detachments taking their leave on the members of the battalion. Is there an emotional reaction as they watch their sick, the women, some women and children, depart for Pueblo? Is there an emotional reaction?

PORTER: There's a tremendous emotional reaction. I suppose they were being weaned at the crossing of the Arkansas, as Nelson Higgins left and went off, and Alva Phelps died, they said of too much calomel and arsenic, and another man dies of an accidental gunshot wound in that process he was unable to continue, and dies. By the time you get to Santa Fe, and you have a changing of the guard, General Kearney sent one of his senior officers back, and that's Philip St. George Cook. He's a captain, but now he's an acting lieutenant colonel and in charge of the battalion, and picks them up there at Santa Fe. And as he looks at this rag tag, worn outfit, he's paring off those that really can't continue the march. And he pares off 82 individuals who cannot do that. And he also sees that it's going to be very difficult to maintain the women and the children, and so he is sending them off and saying, blanket order, all women, all children that are left, you're headed for Pueblo. They were officers who remonstrated and said no way, and they waited upon him, they waited upon Colonel Doniphan, General Doniphan, who was there at the post. And they say, "We were promised that our wives could accompany us." And out of deference to some officers' wives and situations, he finally succumbed and said, "Well, transportation provided, and look out below." But he allowed four women, officers' wives, to continue. And those are wives of both officers and non-commissioned officers who are involved there. And you have Phoebe Draper, and William Coy's wife, and Melissa Corey, and Susan Davis. There are four who are allowed to remain, and there was one stowaway, her name was Sophia Tubbs, and she had a private in the ranks, and was not going to leave him on his own, and so she stowed away in a wagon and then appeared and was known, but her husband became ill, as they sent back Lieutenant Willis' company from the Rio Grande, and so Private Tubbs, William Tubbs took his wife, Sophia back to Pueblo.

VERDOIA: To move forward, because I do have to progress in this tale, the arrival in California, several journals that I have read speak movingly about the first glimpse of the Pacific Ocean. Why is that such an experience? Why is that such a central moment for these men after this thousand-plus-mile march, almost 2,000-mile march, why is that the crowning jewel for them?

PORTER: Just in terms of numbers, and perhaps, it was about 160 miles from Council Bluffs down to

Leavenworth, and then it's 1,100 miles as they go off towards Santa Fe, and then 1,100 miles beyond that they have to go. And a total of some 2,000 miles, and you have a long infantry march. After the inland experience which they'd had in the desert condition, when they came to San Luis Rey, in that vicinity, even though San Luis Rey was abandoned, and they saw that there were oranges and there were dates and there were figs, that this had been a cultivated area, and that there was substantial food in the offing. There were horses running wild, and there were cattle by the numbers. And it was an opportunity for their ration to be increased, and for them to get some other staples into the diet. And that view of the ocean, a number of the men talk about it, Cook himself takes some lines in his *Conquest of New Mexico and California*, the book which he published on his epic march, he says, "This was grandiose indeed," and that he talked about the feelings that were stirred by what he was able to observe. So it's nearing the end of their journey. They're arriving there on the 26th, and they're in what they thought would probably be permanent quarters for a little while down at San Diego by the 29th, and so they're nearing the end of their long march.

VERDOIA: In a very real, tangible sense, it seems to be symbolic that they survived this ordeal?

PORTER: Yes. Very aptly put. They had survived, and Colonel Cook indicates the arduous nature of that, as he pins order number one on that side, on the ocean side, which was not read as it was pinned, but the men were reassigned up at San Luis Rey and they turned right around and are up there the 1st of February, the first part of February, and he's reading that order to them there, rather than in San Diego, and saying, "We've come across a trackless waste together."

VERDOIA: "History may be searched in vain?"

PORTER: Yes.

VERDOIA: How did the men react to that?

PORTER: They were very pleased.

VERDOIA: That's collecting almost from this tough West Point-trained, hard-nosed military officer, where he looks at them and says, "Good job."

PORTER: By and large the men, across the board, gave Cook good marks, and said, "We would not have survived if it had been in the hands of a lesser officer," and they felt that by and large he had been very fair. There were some times when even Jesse D. Hunter, because he spent a night in town, he marched behind the caravan after their experience at Santa Fe, and marched at the rear of his company and was so punished. And others whom Cook might have given a more stringent punishment had not conditions been involved, in terms of sleeping on duty and so forth. He's a very strong individual and a ramrod. But the men by and large appreciated that, and to come from this oracle of command as he gave them this, "History may be searched in vain," order number one, it was very pleasing to them.

VERDOIA: Once the battalion is in California, it then goes to a garrison duty, it's moving back and forth from San Diego and the Los Angeles area, there's responsibilities. But it seems that at this point, after all they've been through, Cook tries to make soldiers out of them, with incessant drilling and training in a fashion that they had never received. To the outside observer this might seem a little ridiculous. The struggle is over and now we're getting the training. How did the men respond to the

drill, drill, drill commands?

PORTER: Time would have hung heavy on their hands if they had not been policing up the barracks, if they had not been bettering their condition, whether at San Diego or at San Luis Rey, or there at Los Angeles. Eventually they'll even build a fort, Fort Moore, and company A will be assigned the primary duties. An engineer with the regular army lays out the confines of that fort and the men get some good, arduous labor, and there's some rotating of that order among the companies as other men are brought in. And you can read it in their muster rolls where it said, "working on the fort," and there's temporary duty on the fort as they do that work. Close order drill, and I guess that's the breadbasket of the military. There's close order drill. There were a number of men who couldn't quite get it right, and non-commissioned officers, and in one case an officer, a lieutenant. He was severely reprimanded, and some of them are demoted in the ranks because they're unable to get the necessary drill, and to shoulder arms, to do the right shoulder and about face and left flank, right flank, and all the rest. If they didn't get it right he made sure that they did. And the men, though they don't have the uniforms, began to, they were cleaner, their beads are shaving, everything up to the ears, that left them with a moustache.

VERDOIA: What, and you mention a couple of settings. You mentioned the mission of San Luis Rey and San Diego, and throughout this battalion of men, many from, with roots across the Atlantic, certainly from New England, are being exposed to a very difficult culture, a Mexican, a Spanish culture, the presence of missionary Catholicism in the southwest. Do the journals tell us about how the men reacted to this different exposure, to this very, very different culture?

PORTER: Yes, it surely does. They're there to absorb what they can or do as a matter of course. And they're very conscious of the vaqueros, they're very conscious of the horsemen and their expertise. They're very conscious of the bull fights they go on. They're very conscious, and they're invited to a funeral, a Catholic funeral. They are conscious of a Catholic wedding. They have witnessed the mass and the priests that work and the effect among the Mexican-Spanish Indians, and their mission system, though largely deserted, and they take advantage of that for billets and so forth. They are obviously impressed, because not everyone goes home. When Jesse D. Hunter loses Lydia Hunter, his wife, in childbirth, then he stayed on and became a part of that culture. He never went back to Utah, never returned, and married again. And he calls the son who has lost his mother, he calls him Diego Hunter, and gives him a Spanish moniker. He had additional children there, and died in Los Angeles, as I recall, in 1882. He went into business there. He was the *acalde*, the Indian agent, at San Luis Rey, and then went north to the gold field, and then came back and was the *acalde* again in that same area that he had presided over before. And so he's entirely ingratiated into the Spanish culture at that time. And there were others who remain and drop off the trail and don't go home. And there are those who go home and come back because they like what they have seen. And they either come back via the gold fields or through settling San Bernardino or what have you. They take up their homesteads in this culture.

Tape MB-9.

VERDOIA: The tour of duty ends, we've made allusions to a few people that stayed or would eventually return, but the vast majority of the members of this very unique American military unit, they make a decision, the decision is almost made for them, they know where they're going to go. They're going to reunite with their families, they're going to reunite with their co-religionists, they're going to reunite with their faith. Tell me how the men perceived this, when they're discharged. There

seems to be no doubt about what they're going to do.

PORTER: There was a very concerted effort on the part of the military in California, the professional military, to retain these men, and there was even a petition, a particular petition coming out of San Diego where company B had been to fire brick and to make adobes and to make wooden housing for wells, and had built the court house of brick, the court house/school house, and had made a very distinctive impression on the people as they were building interiors for people, and doing other things for the Bendini and others. They wanted them to stay, and so they petitioned the government. The governor of California, Mason, sent a, Robert Mason sent a special letter saying, "Please stay," and he had commissioned Stevenson, who had taken the place of T. St. George Cook, J.D. Stevenson, he had invited him to go among them and make promises, and he came down and really tried to encourage them to re-up, and saying that, "You're the third in line here. If the governor goes and I go, then your man, whoever he may be and whoever you elect, will be the responsible person in the southern military district." And this must have hearkened back to their experience before when Jefferson Hunt was not allowed that, as to whether that really would have occurred. But they were saying, "Jefferson Hunt can be your man, or Jeffrey D. Hunter, or Captain Davis, your choice." But the men were invited to re-up. So their enlistment was out July 16th of '46, July 16th of '47, one year's time. And the re-enlistment company was in the offing, and was proffered, and taken. There were 81 men who said yes, we'd like that, and so they re-upped for an additional six-month-plus period. It was called Captain Davis' Mormon company A, Mormon command. And they had that opportunity, and fulfilled that obligation until March 14th of 1848. So there were those, because the destination was still uncertain in the minds of the men in July, there were those who said, "Well, until we know the destination, until and if we can earn additional moneys and be of service that way, we'll stay on." And so you have some who are staying. But others are grouping for the march, and they're preparing in advance, and they get their moneys on time, and they buy their horses and their beef cattle to drive in front of them, and they're choosing routes, "Do we go along the coast line, which is 100 miles longer, it's 700 miles, or do we go near the mountains up through the central area, which is 600 miles?" And they're headed toward Sacramento, San Francisco area. And they chose, again, those captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens, and then they made their rendezvous in the Sacramento area, where they prepared to go across the mountains. And they jerked their beef cattle, and bought what they needed in terms of their supplies, and then headed for the mountains. They ran into a succession of people coming their way, Sam Brannan, who had, a Mormon with 238 saints had gone down around the cape and had gone out to sandwich islands and Hawaii and dumped their cargo and came into Yerba Buena, later San Francisco, and there the saints had established themselves in San Francisco in a new colony called New Hope in the San Joaquin Valley, the first settlement of Caucasians. And as they came through there witnessing all of this, and they're catching Sam Brannan as he came off of Brigham Young, whom he'd met out at the Green River, and who had accompanied him into the valley and leaving some of the battalion coming out of Pueblo. But he is telling them that Brigham Young, the nights are too short, the frost is too much, that every month there's frost, the seeds are too cold, they won't germinate, and Brigham Young will soon be coming my way. And he's giving them a little preview and saying, "It's best that you stay here and come into the valley when you're better able and better supplied, and the better establishment there in the valley." That's confirmed, in reality, by James Brown, Captain James Brown who is the captain and commander of Pueblo came through with a small entourage on his way to collect the pay for the Pueblo detachment of the Mormon battalion. And he said, "Brigham Young said stay planted, stay here and earn your keep. Those who don't have families that they must get to in the immediate, you'd better stay here and work and earn some substance." So again, you have a parting of the ways, and there are those who go on into the valley and help build a bowery for Brigham Young on the tabernacle ground, there are those who turn around and go back, and suddenly 50 men are applying to John Sutter for work at Fort Sutter. And he's employing them,

and others are being employed at San Francisco or wherever. And this sets the stage for those men to get some additional moneys and supplies, but also for the discovery of gold.

VERDOIA: Now they're there, literally at ground zero of the gold discovery, a number of the men are in very close proximity to the initial discovery, and they could have stayed there, and some of them did, made their riches, and yet so many more choose to press on back across the mountains, to rejoin their families, to gather with the saints in the great basin. Let me ask you a silly question. Why?

PORTER: The men are on the march, and there are those who go into the valley, there are those who continue the march clear out to Missouri and join their people at Council Bluffs. And Winter Quarters had been pretty well gathered up by that time, and back across the river, and they'd built their log tabernacle and had their assemblies there in Council Bluffs in Pottawattamie County, Iowa. Those men who could have gone on elected to take the admonition of their leader and to earn additional breadstuffs. They go to work for Sutter, Sutter had numbers of projects which he was in the midst of, and was really expanding. He had thousands of horses and cattle and sheep. He was very interested in building a grist mill, a very large grist mill there on the American River. And yet he needed lumber to build the mill, and he needed lumber for other aspects that he was entering into. And he had a lot of things going. And so he sent off a group of Mormons, and under James Marshall, he employed them and sent them off to build a sawmill. Now James Marshall is the trustee in trust, he's the man who's directing traffic in a semi sometimes partner of Sutter, and along there with him went Henry Bigler, and Alexander Stevens, and Wiley and Ira Willies, and Azariah Smith, they all went up to the Coloma Valley to where they had begun their digging and their work. And these men were employed there in September of '47. They'd been turned back from the mountains, and so that year they were still there. By January, in January, the 24th of '48 they're working there in the tail race, and Marshall sees a glint and begins to look and to do a little prospecting quick time, and he informs the men that he has found what he thinks is gold. And Henry Bigler said, "Our boss on the mill found the gold," and identifies it on the 24th, and they pounded it with a mallet and they put it in a mesquite fire and they gave it to Mrs. Wimmer to put in lye, and they'd run every test that they know of gold, even biting it. And to them it appears to be gold. And so Marshall beats it 50 miles distance to the fort, and said, "I've I think I've got something going." And they put it to the acid test, literally, and they discover that it, indeed, is gold. And they tried to keep a lid on it for a season while they bought property from the Indians, and while they went to Mason, the governor, and socked in there their claim, and even so, in early February the word is out, the Wimmers and others, Dan and John and the boys, they're talking about gold at Sutter's Fort. And Sam Brannan, with an ear to the ground and a California Star on press, he is soon advertising things, and sending the word out, and enters into a partnership with a Mormon or ex-Mormon, Allen Charles Smith, who supposedly joined the church in Nauvoo, but is out in the mountains, and far from Mormondom, joined him opening up a shop for picks and shovels.

VERDOIA: We have made reference to the men completing the journey, and the journey can be viewed complete in a number of ways. But I want you to help us understand that there were men who went, part of the battalion who came through the Sierra-Nevadas, crossed Nevada, came to the great basin, and found that their families were not there. What did those men do? I want you to give me a description of, here these men arrived, they've almost made a complete circuit, they get to the great basin, they find their families are not there at that point. What do these men do?

PORTER: They're out to the Sierra-Nevada and they're out to the Humboldt, and they're into Nevada, and into what becomes Idaho, and some of them are circling up around Fort Hall, and making the trek. There are some who had made the trek before then. Interestingly enough, there were 15 Mormons who, in June had joined with Kearney at, in the San Francisco-Monterrey area, and then at Sutter's,

they were an honorary escort to General Kearney, who was escorting our friend Charles Fremont, who was guilty of insubordination and insurrection in the mind of General Kearney. He was being taken back for trial as an officer of the United States Army, the topographical corps. And a 15-man escort had gone that way. I mentioned that because a couple of them discover their families are on the trail, and they're allowed to drop off the trail and join their families by General Kearney. And the others continue to march to Ft. Leavenworth, and are mustered out of the service there with an additional \$8.60 for their additional time, and rejoin their families at Council Bluffs. So there have been some over on the return journey before, and there are those who go into the valley only to discover their families are not there, and so they are pressing to get back. And some of them left and bore the winter and went back and are there at Council Bluffs to rejoin their families. Others wait in the valley, and others are waiting in California.

VERDOIA: A few final thoughts that I'd like you to share. We started out by talking, this is a lost chapter of our nation's history. Why is this chapter worthy of being remembered, in your opinion?

PORTER: I think that, with the continuous growth of the church, with 11 million people at the present, and statisticians say that will grow astronomically over a period of years, that just the bare-bones history going to become very important over a period of time. We're all already seeing that, as many historians are trying to preserve many aspects of the Mormon experience. Right now there are some 30 people involved in putting together the holograph papers of the prophet Joseph Smith, and this for his birthday, his 200th birthday in the year 2005. And that series may run from nine to twelve volumes, I suppose. Nine volumes at the drop of a hat, and with political papers, with financial papers, with legal papers and other papers, could go on beyond that. But they're very, very anxious to preserve every morsel of our history. Here is a very, very unique moment in time, when loyalists to the government, loyalists to their religion and their convictions, and the American way, the Constitution with all of its principles, they're willing to defend that against a foreign enemy. And those men and their march is an epic march. Perhaps not the longest in military history, perhaps minute effort in terms of a hundred thousand people in the field for the Mexican war. But nevertheless a very unique moment in time for the church, in which those men march and go their way, and their history and their biography are being accumulated, and they're being published and will continue to do so. There is, though there will be a comparatively few number of men involved, yet there, again, new numbers come into play. One man may have a posterity of 12,000 or more, and you multiply that many times over there's a vast posterity, by the tens of thousands, literally, who are very, very interested in their progenitors. And they, I think that they need to have those exemplars. Those men come back, and they're your mayors, and they are your select men, and they are your counselors, they are your patriarchs, they're your bishops, they're your mission presidents, they're your stake presidents, they are out among settlement missions into the wilds of Idaho and of Wyoming and of Colorado and of Arizona, tremendous return back into Maricopa country down on, the Pima country, and the Little Colorado and elsewhere, numbers of these men have seen something, and they go out and out and out, and are on settlement missions. They have made a contribution that won't quit, and certainly doesn't stop with their posterity.

VERDOIA: Okay.

## Battalion - About the Program - Interviews - Sherman Fleek - Interviewed by Ken Verdoia

Ken: Feeling that the dawn of 1846, James K. Polk is President of the United States, and I will look at people, if not the exact phrase, it's the spirit of something known as manifest destiny. How did he make a contemporary audience appreciate what manifest destiny meant back in 1846.

Sherman: I can't think of two better words that really depict what manifest destiny is and what they used. It's really an idea of a mission to go out and bring American values, American democracy, and American culture throughout the United States to the Pacific coast. It's almost a tidal wave affair, and for us in this day and age, you know, it was political, it was cultural, it was economical, it was everything. So I think that's how it's just one way to look at it.

Ken: There are some obvious roadblocks. Manifest destiny sounds like a simple concept but there are a couple of significant roadblocks that exist to putting it into practical effect. How do you view those roadblocks? What were they?

Sherman: Some of the roadblocks were the land of terrain itself. It was difficult, it was challenging and beautiful coming across the rivers, the mountains, the deserts, and the prairies. Of course, there was also the wildness of the terrain and also there were Indians and other peoples who inhabited this land. So there was an opportunity to make friendships and allies. Sometimes that went very well, sometimes it didn't. Some people liken it to a steamroller that just rolled across the United States. Some saw it as a vision, like President Polk did. You know, go to the west coast to California. Others thought, while we're at it, why don't we just go into Mexico, Canada, and take the whole North American continent. So there were different fractions that looked at manifest destiny in a different way. The tract record was mostly good but there were also some aspects in manifest destiny that wasn't well thought out, well orchestrated, and well executed.

Ken: Polk is one, at least for me, of the under credited figures of American history in terms of what he was able to accomplish in four very short years. He did face the very real, potentially daunting prospect of having to fight two wars at once under this vision, under this marching banner of manifest destiny. Can you help us understand that fear of two wars?

Sherman: In spring 1846, because of the idea of manifest destiny moving on, there were two major blocks; Oregon up in the North, which was Canadian and owned by Great Britain and also a joint one with us, and then of course, Texas and Mexico through the southern part of the states. So, it wasn't really a two-front war like in World War II or World War I. It was two wars with two separate belligerent nations. So that would have been a very difficult aspect to orchestrate and to manage and to fight. Polk, well we went to war with Mexico over Texas and the Southwest. He cleverly worked out a good deal with Great Britain, and avoided that war. A lot of us may remember from our school books, the old trite saying, "fifty four forty or fight." That was the longitudinal line, but most Americans thought it should have been part of America, but they settled on the 49th parallel. That was a brilliant stroke for Polk. I don't think he really wanted to fight Britain over Oregon but he wanted Oregon.

Ken: This proved that to an aspect of the war with Mexico being declared and we'll skip some of the different interpretations. Did Polk deliberately pick the fight? Let's go to the concept of waging a war with the nation of Mexico. Help us understand the nature of the United States army at the outbreak of

hostility and what it needed to become to be able to fight a successful conflict.

Sherman: The army at the beginning of the Mexican war, the Rebel army, was a small army, about 8,000 soldiers on the books, about 7,000 in actual bodies. Only about eight regiments of infantry, two of artillery, and two of maverick troops, and it spread out all over the West in small posts everywhere, a couple companies here, none of the regiments were together, so it was a very daunting task and when Polk, when war was declared, called for 50,000 volunteers. Within a few months they had to get the equipment, arms, uniforms, logistics, all this for some 50,000 soldier volunteers - then another 15 or 20,000 regulars that were brought in to the U.S. army. So it was a very challenging thing.

Ken: I want to skip forward a little bit, and I'm not going to ask you to recount all the details of the flight of the Latter Day Saints and the appointment of Jessie C. Little, but I want to cut straight to what I believe to be one of the most fascinating documents of all time. That is a letter prepared by Jessie C. Little for the President of the United States, James K. Polk, and if you and I shared an opinion on this letter that is that it's a political masterpiece. What Little managed to do in that letter to the President was he basically was seeking an opportunity to speak with the President? What did he manage to achieve in that letter?

Sherman: The beauty of the letter from Jessie Little to President Polk is the passion in it. He had been waiting for two weeks to hear from the President. He wanted to see the President. Finally he wrote this letter and set down and dictated what he thought was an overview of the Latter Day Saints situation. They were out on the trek or going across the great plains, they had left their homes, they had been pushed out of another state, they wanted to be Americans, they wanted to serve and continue to be citizens and help colonize, but they were pretty discouraged because the federal government and the state government didn't help them. So, he recounted several things; a little bit of the persecution, their desires to be citizens and loyal Americans. He mentioned about 40,000 saints being in Britain. This is very much on Polk's mind because he was almost ready to go to war with Great Britain over Oregon territory with 40,000 Latter Day Saints in Britain, which is probably a high number. I wouldn't assume it's probably much less than that, but what is the master's stroke to include that in the letter and say we are here to serve and be Americans, but if America will not have us, they won't take care of us, they won't befriend us, won't treat us as equal and a citizen, then we will go and join with another country or party. To Polk that meant Mexico, or Great Britain, or perhaps start their own republic out west somewhere. Polk didn't like that. It prompted him to call Jessie Little in. Two days later he had his meeting.

Ken: President Polk, Zachary Taylor, Winfield Scott, don't really need a Mormon Battalion do they to wage the successful war against Mexico?

Sherman: There was no need to have a Mormon Battalion for manpower. There were plenty of volunteers to go and execute the national war aims against Mexico, but Polk saw it as an opportunity for several things. One is to prevent the Latter Day Saints from becoming enemies against them. It's very unlikely, but he thought of that. Also it was a political move. It was seen as an opportunity to ally these people with their own roots, which was America. So it wasn't a question of so much loyalty or patriotism or anything of that nature or manpower needs, he had plenty of soldiers ready to enlist, it was all political.

Ken: And so comes about the genesis of what you identify in your manuscript history and one of the most unique military units ever brought together under the flag of the United States. So let's take an opportunity Sherman. Why do you use that label of one of the most unique, if not the most unique

military unit ever brought together?

Sherman: In our Nation's military list we have a lot of interesting units, ethical units, racial units, but we don't have religious units. Because of the separation of church and state this would never happen today. But think of taking three or four hundred Catholics or Methodists and putting them together in a battalion or a company or an air force squadron. It would never happen today. So the combination of the military and the religion is just fascinating. It's perhaps the only unit in our Nation's history that was a religious unit. There is a couple ways to look at this. One is, it had a religious designation. All our units in our military, except for some militia units, are pretty well numbered like the 1st U.S. Trojans, second U.S. infantry, but the Mormon Battalion, all dispatches, all musters, everything, had U.S. Mormon Battalion on its letterhead and headquarters Mormon Battalion, and it's made up all of soldiers of one unit, of one religion, one denomination. They joined not because of patriotism so much, but because a church leader asked them to join. If Brigham Young had not solicited them, called them to serve, there would have been no Mormon Battalion.

Ken: There are a couple points that I want to further delve in to, but you will probably get to that point. Polk when he instructed Kearney, and when the obstructions come up in the war department to Kearney, there's almost a tempering fact. You list them, but there's a quota that he puts in and I would like you to address that.

Sherman: The army of the West generals saw what Kearney was forming out in Fort Leavenworth had trojans and a couple of anticipated regiments of Missouri volunteers, so it's going to number around 1500 to 2500 soldiers initially. In Polk and William Marsh's secretary of wars letter to General Kearney was to enlist the Mormons but not have them be or number more than 1/3 of the total force. I think Polk, Marcy, maybe even General Kearney, he was a Colonel of infantry at this time, were a little skeptical of the loyalties and didn't want the majority of their force to go into California, being tired of the Latter Day Saints, so that is why President Polk thought 1/3 was a good ratio.

Ken: There were also ... that were anti-Mormon that were being expressed, were there not?

Sherman: Yes. It was very common in the United States at this time to have a little devious eye about the Latter Day Saints, who they were, what they practiced, their religious beliefs, and so on, and Polk being a learned current person in current affairs would know about these things. But I think he showed some greatness and tolerance in at least extending this opportunity to the L.D. S. Church and the Mormons to serve in this capacity.

Ken: Kearney calls upon a captain, I guess if I continue to serve as captain that Jane Down gives him the instruction, "Go recruit this battalion up to 500 men." Here's about where they are, head out there young man, and race together and recruit this battalion. So Allan rides out with an escort, prepares his circulate, climbs up, and you and I have the same vision that ... got, standing on the back of a wagon, gathers the people around them, and begins his pitch, trembling about that incident in the revolt that Captain Allan experienced on that first day.

Sherman: Well Captain Allan was a great frontier army officer, West Point Class 1829. He graduated with Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, so when he arrives in the camps of Israel in Iowa, he assumes what we think is that this would be an easy thing, that the Latter Day Saints would be willing to serve their country. So he stands forth, reads the circular, and gets zero response. No volunteers come forward. I'm sure he thought this was just an amazing thing, but you have to understand that here is a

professional officer, a regular in uniform, several trogons with him, and the Latter Day Saint experience up to that point. There were problems with the uniform too, to a degree- the Missouri militia, the Illinois militia. Though the Latter Day Saints had their own uniform militia in Nauvoo, still this was from the U.S. government and there was some bitterness about the Federal Government's unwillingness to help the Saints. So it was really an interesting situation and some probably cold water on his face when he arrived in the camps and not one soldier or perspective soldier came forth.

Ken: But he does press on forward to meet with Brigham Young. Clearly he understands there is more to the story than what immediately meets the eye. After a period of time Young and Allen come to have an understanding, a bit of respect blowing in both directions, and Brigham Young becomes an ally and then the image changes where it's not just Captain Allen but it's Captain Allen and Brigham Young turning into a recruiting person. How did that change the situation?

Sherman: Once Captain Allen had Brigham Young on his side, it was an easy situation in many ways from then on. Once the leader of the church realized that this was something good, this was something positive, this was something that the church could benefit from, then Brigham Young went forward. In fact, he made the decision the day before Captain Allen showed up at the Missouri River, Brigham Young knew that this was a good thing. So here are the two unlikely people; an army captain and a religious leader going forth and recruiting men who are in the middle of a huge exodus to go and fight in the war hundreds, almost 2000 miles away. It made a unique combination. From what we get from the journals and the records, they got along quite well. They became very close friends. Brigham Young had the greatest respect for Captain Allen.

Ken: But you also make note that Brigham Young support for the recruiting effort is tied to some assurances that he refused from Captain Allen and that are clearly understood through Captain Allen's call that the Latter Day Saints officers would step forward and offer leadership, the Potawatomie Land Settlement Agreement, and also the ability of family and even children to accompany some of the soldiers. So we got this agreement, each one of which you say, your manuscript is pretty unusual.

Sherman: Yes. For Brigham Young and Captain Allen to have worked out a deal, so to speak. What Brigham Young was really looking for was the opportunity to settle his saints on Indian lands for a temporary period of time until they could move out west. So here's this representative of the Federal Government, Captain Allen, and he inquires about that and Captain Allen agrees. He says that he would forward that approval to the President until the President would do otherwise. So that was real important to Brigham Young. There are a couple other conditions that were provided to Captain Allen, but as in military operations, it would make it very difficult to execute, especially in war. One was that if Captain Allen died, and he eventually became a Lieutenant-Colonel commanding at the time, but in his passing or inability to command, the next commander would be the senior captain, which would be A company, Jefferson Hunt, who is a Latter Day Saint who had next to no experience in military matters. So that was the first condition. The second one was several families, many children, elderly teamsters, other people joined them and accompanied their family, their men, on the march, and this was a difficult thing in combat operations. Throughout history there has always been camp followers but not normally during the campaigning season. The third aspect was Brigham Young had him promise that they would not divide the battalion. All these promises were eventually broken.

Ken: We're looking at those in turn. Because I believe one of the passages that you write about is the leave taking. The 500 men are recruited, the companies are formed, and they are ready to march out to Fort Leavenworth, merely to be outfitted, be equipped. There's a leave take. This is in times a memorial. The war you're going to war, leaving the home, generally leave heart and home. Leave the

family behind, says goodbye to the home, but you point out, to be quite leadingly, that this leave taking is completely different from natural history. How do you feel to be ...?

Sherman: One of the greatest assurances a soldier has when he goes off to war is to know that his family is home and safe, at home and heart. That's a very important foundation to go through the bitterness and the privation of combat. But with the Latter Day Saints the Mormon Battalion members didn't have that assurance. They had families but they are crossing the plains themselves, with all the diseases, the lack of food, the unknown aspect of where they are going, whether it was all the way to California or the Great Basin, or somewhere in what is now Idaho. They didn't have that assurance. They didn't have that confidence that their families are being taken care of, and their families had to rely upon other people in the church for their welfare and being. That would be a very, very difficult thing for any soldier in any time. I'm sure in history there are times when soldiers went to war with families, unstable family situations and so on, but that's more of an individual thing instead of a universal thing.

Ken: Another issue that I find interesting is when the battalion is called together and they march off to "The Girl I Left Behind." Anyone who has any experience with military service in the 20th century knows you're first off in basic training. "We're going to make a man out of you. We're going to make a unit out of you. We're going to make a soldier, a marine, an airman out of you." The training comes first. But that doesn't take place in this era and it certainly doesn't take place for the Mormon Battalion. I drag that issue of the object of training and certainly they are considered in very real thing a military unit.

Sherman: When they left Iowa and started heading south toward Ft. Leavenworth, they were so far behind on their time schedule and Captain Allen realized that he had to move quickly. He wanted to come down the Missouri on a steamboat. That didn't work. So they got to Leavenworth and were fitted out about as fast as they could. They had very little time to train. Then again they were so far behind General Kearney and the rest of the army of the West that they just pressed on. Their march wasn't extremely fast, but once they got to California months later is when they really went through their training, which is in that era it was a unit training aspect where the officers and the non commissioned officers would drill the soldiers many hours for several weeks on everything they are expected to do in combat. All the drills, all the maneuvers, firing, reloading, firing, and everything else they are expected to do. In this day and age there was no basic training, as we understand it today. It was all at unit level by very qualified experienced officers and then filled. But the Mormon Battalion didn't really have the intensive training they needed until they got to California.

Ken: I know you've had a couple people raise this question to you. What difference does that make? Are you ... them potentially marching to battle without training, literally without training?

Sherman: When soldiers go to war, if they are not drilled, trained, and disciplined then it's just a mob. So to stand up and fire volley after volley against opposing forces that is 100 to 150 yards away firing lethal lead at you is a very donking thing. Unless you have the training and the discipline to stand there, fire, reload, fire, reload, and do anything else that the commanding officer wants, you don't have a unit. You don't have unit cohesion - it's not a team element. Many, many militia units, even stronger units, regular units, have failed because their training and discipline failed them.

Ken: How did 21st century audience understand the nature of unit field combat in the 1840s. What did

it mean when two armies approached each other to engage together in combat?

Sherman: In the Mexican War most of the firearms used were schoolboy muskets that fired about a 69 caliber solid round bullet of lead. They would fire at each other at about a hundred yards because beyond a hundred yards you really couldn't hit anything with any lethality. They didn't really practice or train for marksmanship, they just aimed and fired on groups. So you have these lines, formations, two ranks deep that are firing regiment against regiment, brigade against brigade, about 100 to 150 yards away, and they would stand and fire, maneuver and fire, try to use some covering concealment at times, until one soul was beaten down, bloodied, or they couldn't, they lost their combat power and effectiveness. Then there was the ensuing charge, often with the bayonet. So this is what it was like in the Mexican War battle.

Ken: A very brutal direct confrontation between military units.

Sherman: It's amazing to stand there a hundred yards away from other soldiers and at that point you could pretty well see their faces, their expressions, their eyes, things of that nature, and it was just a human dimension that was incredible, unlike today when we are kilometers away shooting tank rounds at each other and pinpoint precision bombs hitting. It's just a whole different thing. Then when it climaxed in that final charge, when a Calvary came through on their horses, it was just terrifying, but discipline and training is what kept the unit together.

Ken: Any shred of thought that this might be a march that would become easy or be a lark evaporated almost immediately when the battalion was leaving Council Bluff because there's a death come around. It seems to center zero over on Sherman that this is going to be an ardent task, this marching through the American West. From your reading, would you say the diaries and journals met the conclusion that you came to?

Sherman: After they left Council Bluff two days out, Samuel Bolley died. They had 23 soldiers eventually die of natural causes during their year's service. I think part of this was because they weren't really fit physically for the demands of combat and the march. So that was one thing. We always think of these Mormon pioneers as the great pioneers, and they were, but they weren't in the spring of 1846. They were just learning how to be pioneers. So the idea of marching 15, 20, 25 miles a day and then once they got their equipment, carrying that, and then going along the Santa Fe trail, which was very barren, very different than what they had seen in Nauvoo and Illinois and Missouri, where it was nice and green. They were going across some of the most horrendous terrain in North America. So the combination of they weren't really physically ready at first and the fact of the difficult route that they went along, I think, was just one of the astounding things that they in many ways made it at all.

Ken: Another passage that struck me as being very, very memorable from your manuscript was you point out that lead ball from an enemy created fewer casualties in the Mexican War than natural elements and disease. Can you direct that the real opponent, the real foe of the foot soldier was often due to fighting disease, fighting for their very health.

Sherman: In every war until the 1st World War there were always more soldiers who perished from natural causes than combat. In the Mexican War there were about 1700, 1800 soldiers that died from combat or wounds from combat, but about 12,000 died from diseases and accidents and things of this nature. That was always the case throughout all history. So the improvement of the medical operations

in our modern times is what changed this and the ability to get soldiers off the battlefield quickly and the improvement of hygiene and things of this nature, but these soldiers in the Mexican War, their biggest enemy, mostly neutral enemy, was disease.

Ken: Excellent, very well depicted. That point is driven home mentally from the first death in their ranks, but as they were outfitted and begin to march, hurrying along to Santa Fe, they leave without their commanding officer. Captain, now Colonel volunteers came down, remains behind in Santa Fe too ill to depart, and as the battalion marches along, I feel in the journals the reflection of the affection that has developed between the men and their commanding officer, who they felt had been mindful of caring for them, of leading in a positive sense, and the relationship that had developed between Allen and Brigham Young, so they had a level of confidence in this commanding officer. Then word come to camp that Colonel Allen is dead. That had a stun of impact on these men doesn't it?

Sherman: It's just fascinating to understand the relationship involved that the Mormon men had for Lieutenant-Colonel James Allen. He was probably no more or no less vulgar, mean, tough, ornery than Lieutenant Andrew Jackson Smith later, or Phillip Saint George Cooke, but for some reason they really learned to love him and respect him. So when they received word that Colonel Allen had died back at Fort Leavenworth, it was traumatic for them. Wayne Cory in his journal mentioned something about "we had great love and respect for this man even though he was a gentile," and that is quite an admonition and combination in my eyes. It is just amazing how much they loved him. They really felt fatherless at this point.

Ken: And it also triggers the first crisis of confidence based on the agreement between Brigham Young and Colonel Allen, and that is the fundamental issue of leadership.

Sherman: When Colonel Allen died and they received word of it up in the plains of Kansas, some of the officers got together and decided that they needed to review the laws and decide what was the next step. They knew perfectly well that Brigham Young and Colonel Allen decided that the next commander would be Jefferson Hunt. That is what they did. Then within a day or two they received word that another army officer Lieutenant Henry Jackson Smith was coming forward and he was going to ask or request to assume command. This was very big ... to them. But I think the important thing here to understand is once Smith arrived, he sat down with the officers, none of the enlisted were involved in this decision, and that caused a lot of heartburn later. But once they sat down and discussed it, they realized the Mormon officers did not have their commissions. Yes, they were in a unit. Yes, they'd signed their names. Yes, they were marching off to war, but they didn't have legal authority in the way of a commission. Therefore they could not obtain the requisite logistic need supplies, the food, provisions, or anything they needed from the quartermaster core or any of the other departments. That is what Lieutenant Smith brought to their attention. He was a trained officer, he knew the procedures, he knew the system, and he would take care of them, and he did. There was a problem later on with Colonel Sterling Price, a Missourian. He didn't want to turn over some rations and supplies to the Mormon Battalion, but Smith, as a lieutenant in the regular army forced him to do it. I don't think Captain Hunt would have been able to do that.

Ken: But as you say down to the last the enlisted men there's a great grumbling at work about who is this Lieutenant A. J. Smith. Why aren't men leading as promised? Do you sense that reading diaries and journals that there's kind of the enlisted men, good satisfaction. Some of them may see the benefit of going, but others still resent people like Levi Hancock.

Sherman: There were many in the battalion that resented very much the decision that was made to turn

the command over to Lieutenant Smith. They were bitter about it, even for years afterwards. There are a couple things to understand here though. All these soldiers joined the military at the same time. They were equal. They were brothers. They had joined and some got to be officers or sergeants and some didn't. And so there is that animosity there and all at first, and that is natural with all militia units. What is unique about the Mormon Battalion is militia units and volunteer units voted or elected their officers, but in the Mormon Battalion's case, Brigham Young appointed them, another church call. So they respected that authority, it's not military authority, but ecclesiastical authority through Brigham Young. When they were not involved in that decision, that caused some problems because they still saw these Mormon officers and then feel as equals in many ways, and they felt left out. They felt deprived.

Ken: I thought the grumbling towards A. J. Smith was difficult to imagine until I read the diaries and journals comments about the assistant-surgeon of the battalion, Dr. George Sanderson, and his legendary metal spoon. But there is a wide spread suspicion among the battalion that they are dealing with a momentum force in this medical officer. Can you help me better understand that?

Sherman: Well the assistant-surgeon, who was appointed by Lieutenant-Colonel Allen, was George B. Sanderson. I would think he was born in Britain, he lived in Missouri, was a slave owner. He became assistant-surgeon and he also received a commission as a medical officer. So he had to pass a very difficult strenuous test back in the 1840s to come a medical officer, but his bedside manner, his ability, his respect for the men, and his treatment of them was just appalling. Now there is this legend or feeling that was prevalent at that time, and still today, that Dr. Sanderson purposely murdered some of the soldiers. My big question is why? What is the motive behind a surgeon to kill his own men? To kill the wards that he has stewardship over. I mean he's in the military too. He could be court martialed and executed if found guilty of such a crime. There is no motivation for him to do this. This is not 1838, Missouri, and the war is going on, this is a different situation. Though he may have used practices and treatments that would appall us today, they were the standard and common treatments of that time period.

Ken: Let's talk about one of those standard practices in the 1840s that make me shutter to think about, and that the dose of medicine that was designed to cure basically anything we couldn't figure out the cause of, and that group notion of calomel and parsnip. How that can be applied to someone and the doctor to coming to the decision of, " this is what you need kid."

Sherman: With the routine of day of the soldier, you know there's revelry in the first column and sick column, and all these different call to arms and so soldiers are going up and they didn't feel well that day or they had a problem and they would go to the surgeon and he would treat them. But with the Mormon Battalion it got to be a difficult situation because Dr. Sanderson always gave them almost the same thing, which was cow milk which had a little bit of arsenic in it, which was the practice and treatment that was very prevalent throughout America at the time. The men felt, as admonished by Brigham Young and other leaders, not to use mineral medicines. Therefore they had a problem with it. So some of the soldiers would come up sick, they wanted to ride in the wagons, they would take the medicine in a little cup and throw the cup away or fake that they took the medicine. Then Doctor Sanderson realized what was going on and he personally ministered the medicine using a spoon to each soldier. So there were quite a few who were sick that wouldn't go see him. But it is amazing, even with all this viciousness and circles going around about Dr. Gaff and everything about him, there was still men on the sick call every day, sick rest. When they got to Santa Fe another fifty or sixty was found medically unfit to continue on and they were released.

Ken: Let's talk about it in a little bit detail, because one of the things that Lieutenant A. J. Smith does is kind of rebel against this motion of the immense caravan that has become the Mormon Battalion. Basically he says I've got to do something to get this unit more under control. And he really addresses two people; the invalid and the families. Can you tell me how Smith tries to step in and take control and command this body?

Sherman: Well Smith took command of the battalion at Council Grove, which is in eastern central Kansas. By the time they hit the Arkansas River which was getting close to what is now today Oklahoma, he realized the related march and the difficulty involved with the sick soldiers and the amount of families and the people that were dying, just made it very difficult to accomplish any type of march rate. There was no standard march rate back then, but 20 to 25 miles was normal. So he determined to break one of the promises given to Brigham Young, and that was defied when he determined to send out some of the families to what became Pueblo. Now he had received orders a few days earlier that he needed to take the Cimarron cutoff there by avoiding Ben's Fort along the Arkansas River. So when he hit the Arkansas and was going up it, that was the point that he needed to lighten the burden. Not all the families went but a good share of them and an escort of ten soldiers. Then later there was the other sick detachments.

Ken: Again it stems a lot of discontent among the men because here we have this man in quick order. First of all he's taking over and it's suppose to be our offices. Now he's dividing the battalion, he's sending off women, he's sending off children, he's sending off our sick, but he's also sending off an attachment of ten other men and not providing them. I would imagine this produced a ripple of discontent again among the battalion.

Sherman: Within two or three weeks after Smith took command, they had this issue with Dr. Sanderson dividing of the battalion, some of the woman and children going off, and I think also that just the difficulty of the terrain and the march was very unsettling for the men and they wondered how long this march would take. So all these things combined and Smith taking Command, it was just a difficult time for the men. They did not have the military background experience. So a lot of this was new to them, and this is also war, so the operations tempo in intensity, especially in Smith, were very apparent. Here was the opportunity to fight and engage in combat. Soldiers don't relish going to war, but it is their business and they may go and execute, and Smith was the same way.

Ken: Very well stated. This discontent may have passed relatively quick if not for the arrival of a singular individual, John Doyle Lee, at that moment when the nerves are frayed the worst in the battalion, in comes the presence of John Doyle Lee. Tell me how he impacts this mix of emotions.

Sherman: John D. Lee arrived in camp at just an incredible historical time. The night before Private Albert Phelps had died. They buried him that morning, the next morning on the 17th, and John D. Lee learns that the battalion has been divided. Some of the woman and children were leaving that very day, and to have a Lieutenant Smith in command, and Dr. Sanderson was giving them mineral medicines that Brigham Young commanded them not to take, and that the soldiers were dying. John D. Lee was difficult, had an austere personality, and he was zealous, he was determined, he was many, many things. He came in and he immediately tried to take control of the events from Lieutenant Smith. It's amazing in that day and age that Lieutenant Smith didn't put him in irons and arrest him.

Ken: Certainly one way to be characterized is an interloper, an outsider, a man not connected to this

military unit try making rebellion, if not ...

Sherman: Yes. It's interesting that what John D. Lee had going for him was this unsaid authority from Brigham Young. He was a messenger. He was going to catch up with the battalion and at Santa Fe receive some of their salaries and take them back to the camps of Israel. So he was a very important to the men, having the symbol. Here is a man with authority, but he had no business as a civilian interfering in military operations period, especially in war. So it's fortunate that Lieutenant Smith didn't clap him in irons and arrest him on the spot.

Ken: Did he also, for ... stop and think about the essential nature of the battalion's commitment? Did John D. Lee have any business beyond carrying letters from Council Bluff and families to the battalion. If he carried an order from Brigham Young that would have said, "Gentleman I've reconsidered." Tell me what impact you think that might have had and how that reflects on the nature of the battalion service.

Sherman: Well, because so many joined for religious reasons and not for so much personal or patriotic or collective patriotism, they were there in a religious capacity, and a third leader, Brigham Young, had sent John D. Lee down to Santa Fe with a dispatch that said, "Brethren I've changed my mind. This is not a good thing. I want you to return to the camps of Israel." There is no doubt in my mind, but this is sure speculation also, that there were had been mass desertion the next morning. Maybe a few would have stayed around, who knows, but there's just no doubt that they would have deserted. They would have left. Now that may be unsettling for many of us today, but because they joined only because Brigham Young and the church leaders asked them to, that was their commitment. When that commitment no longer existed, then the service was no longer there.

Ken: One thing you mentioned and this is what brought about my discussion of John D. Lee, is the role of pay and the importance of the military pay. I want to just recap that. There's a big ... the clothing allowance that was provided to militia in with the pay and what was going to happen to that money, what Brigham Young also might happen with that money.

Sherman: Well the whole underlying aspect of the recruiting the battalion was that some of the salaries that the men would earn would go to the church, go to their families and help with the exodus. The saints were just so needful of money and resources to outfit so many families and thousands of people crossing the plains, so this was something that was just a God- sent because, you know, Jessie Little was in the East trying to get a government contract and it materialized in a military operation. So the money was paramount. When they arrived at Fort Leavenworth, they received a clothing allowance of \$42 for their one-year service, and that added up to be about 21 thousand dollars for 500 plus men. About \$5,000 went directly to the church for its use. Brigham Young felt a little unsettled about that. He felt there should have been more donated, but most of the money went back with the families. Now another interesting thing is that it is not that they gave up so much in not getting their uniforms, Fort Leavenworth didn't have the uniforms to give them. When you go from an army of six or eight thousand to 80 or 90 thousand in two months, you don't have the logistical support to provide for that many soldiers. So there were many units who didn't receive their uniforms. Some units didn't receive their pay until they finished their year's service. The Mormon Battalion was fortunate. They got their allowance at Fort Leavenworth, their clothing allowance, and then they got an advance on some of their pay and then another advance in the form of checks at Santa Fe and they received their final pay in California. Colonel Alexander Doniphan's first Missouri mounted served the whole year, fought two major battles, went 3,500 miles through terrible terrain also, ended up on the Gulf Coast, and they

didn't receive their money until they got to Louisiana. So the Mormon Battalion was fortunate.

Ken: One thing that I would like you to address is this: A number of romantic thinking that many years after the battalion's march, and the one that it sticks in mind, is the depiction of the battalion marching off, in firmly locked up, in razor sharp rank, all in sharp blue uniforms, marching out smartly under billowing banners. How does that match up with the practical reality of the Mormon Battalion on the march in Santa Fe?

Sherman: When they left the camps in Iowa and also at Leavenworth, they were a hodge podge gaggle, is what we would say today, of just a group of men walking and marching together. Now maybe they tried to keep some step in time and they had the musicians out there beating and blowing tunes and so on, but they hadn't been trained and the paintings that depict them in parade style, uniforms, and maneuvers is not at all historically correct. They didn't receive their uniforms first of all, and second they were not trained and drilled to march affectively. Marching and drilling is a lot different than just walking and going along a trail.

Ken: Do you think they arrived in Santa Fe, which is the major jumping off point, recently gone under United States control by General Kearney, the base if you will, for the army of the West. Kearney moves on to California but he makes the decision. Lieutenant A. J. Smith, perhaps too young and out of rank to lead the battalion. The battalion needs to be moved along. Kearney makes the decision to appoint Phillip Saint George Cooke as commanding officer of the battalion. Tell me about this man, Phillip Saint George Cooke. He steps forward as the new commanding officer of the Mormon Battalion.

Sherman: When the battalion arrived at Santa Fe there were two things awaiting them, a hundred-gun salute by Colonel Doniphan and Captain Phillip Saint George Cooke, West Point Class of 1827, one of the first families of Virginia. He had joined or gone to West Point at the age of 14 and graduated at 18. He had been on the frontier for 20 years. He knew everything there was to know about combat operations and the frontier army, how to push animals, how to push men, go through the worst terrain in the worst conditions. He had served all over the frontier. He was a hard, tough, mean, ornery, professional soldier, but he took care of his troops. I think the battalion men thought anything could be better than Smith. They probably didn't realize that Cooke was tougher than Smith. Cooke was just a great frontier officer all the way around, and he was fair but tough and austere, and for some reason most men really learned to respect him. There were a few who didn't. Levi Hancock, Wayne Corral, they had some real problems with Cooke, but most of the men respected him.

Ken: When the battalion meets Colonel Cooke, Colonel Cooke also meets the battalion. One of the first things he does he notes in his journal and eventually translates into his report, his first assessment of the battalion, his fighting force that he is going to lead to California. Do you recall some of the general observations that Colonel Cooke had of how the battalion appeared when he took command?

Sherman: Well Lieutenant-Colonel Cooke was an amazing writer. He kept a great journal, and one of the first things he wrote was his review or his idea of what the battalion status was, their combat effectiveness, and he come up with what I call, "It is too .... It is too cumbersome with woman and children. It is too untrained. It is too focused on other things." There are just many things that he lists that were apparent to him as a professional, with the professional eye, that the battalion at that point was not combat ready. So he listed them, and you know, the woman, the children, the lack of

discipline, the lack of resources and logistic support. All these things were very apparent to him.

Ken: But also apparently is the urgency of General Kearney moving in on California and Kearney's orders to Cooke. Basically what is Kearney telling Cooke and by extension of the times?

Sherman: Well men in any military operation, especially when you're invading a foreign hostile country, you want to try and keep your units together as close as possible so they can support each other in different aspects. Here we have a mounted group of about 300 trogons under Kearney, he drops back 200 later because he finds out California is supposedly concurred, but he needs infantry support and that's the Mormon Battalion, and they were very slow in getting to Santa Fe. They outfitted again and he wanted them to follow him as fast as possible, but he also wanted them to bring the logistical support wagons, carve out a wagon road to California that he knew that would be important to resupply him later during the campaign. So there was a sense of urgency and Cooke realized this. He and Kearney had served together for almost 20 years already.

Ken: The nature of this march becomes, if not clear by the time you reach Santa Fe, abundantly clear as they move away from the Rio Grande River, and they start crossing stretches where water day in and day out, no presence of water. How does 21st century comfortable audience understand what it was like being on, even termed forced march, a hard march, a sense of urgency in that terrain. What it must have been like?

Sherman: Unless you've spent some time in the great American Southwest, it is so hard to understand and appreciate where Cooke went and where the battalion followed. It's some of the most difficult, it's beautiful terrain on the continent, and water was the thing. Without water you are nothing. You've got animals, you've got oxen, and you've got a cattle herd you're pushing along. Cooke also had sheep, he's got his horses and the men. They need water to wash, to clean, to drink, to do everything, and an Arab climate like this, it's just so difficult. That's why he gathered together ten or fifteen scouts and he'd lead them out days at a time to find water.

Cooke was an experienced frontier army officer. He knew how far, how long, and at what rate he could travel day after day after day, how much water he needed, and how long the stock would last, so he was experienced in this. He was so careful in trying to find the right water at the right places along the route, but for the most part they were all going through, even the scouts, going through land and terrain that none had visited before, or very few Americans had gone across.

Ken: There's an incident that occurs near the boarder of what is today New Mexico and contemporary Arizona where days they've gone without water and there is a small little crevice in a rock outcropping that results in a small little, very small little pool of water, and the men see it and they drop on it. They talk of pulling out their spoons and thinking to catch the drips that come from the rock, just to quench their thirst. They write of the dominant Cooke riding up, telling the men to get back, and bringing the mules in to drink first. Some of the men write in passionate language how could he do this? How could he do this? I ask you, how could he do this?

Sherman: Well crossing through Southern New Mexico they had this one incidence where they came to a build up of rock formations and they found a little sprinkle of a spring and the men were there with their cups and their spoons trying to ladle it out and drink some water. Cooke arrived and he ordered them away from it, and he wanted the stock, the mules, and the horses taken care of first. This really was difficult for the men. There were quite a few journal entries. Of course we only have that

episode from the men's experience, but you know Cooke was a good officer so there are times when the stock needed water more than the men and visa versa. Later in California, almost the same situation, they came across a pool of water and the mules were bawling and screaming about because they were so thirsty and one of the officers asked about if their mules should we water them now and he says, "No, the men come first. I don't give a darn about the mules."

Ken: So it just depended on the situation.

Sherman: I think so.

Ken: I don't mean to grope too quickly over this landscape, but I'm drawn to Tucson, Arizona, because to me Tucson seems to be the most tangible expression of what I call a rumor of war. As they are approaching Tucson a couple days out, the scouts report that Tucson is garrison, there could be ... and that as many as 200 soldiers in Tucson, well defended with canons, obviously potentially ready to do battle, and Cooke as commanding officer is looking at the ???? seriously at the Mormon Battalion as a fighting unit. How did you respond to this?

Sherman: Well after they left the San Pedro River they are heading toward Tucson and they receive word as they cross this desert that there is a garrison at Tucson of Mexican soldiers. Word has it 200. Eventually it is learned that it is about 150 because Dr. Steven Foster is captured by the Mexicans and he relays that report to Cooke. There are about 150 men there. Cooke approached Tucson, I think, the way he should have. He went forth deliberately, he stopped and trained at times, gave the men a little bit of training so they would be prepared somewhat in case there was a fight, but he also made contact with the opposing force and laid out his desires and designs, which were to go through Tucson and continue his march. He had no deliberate site against these Mexicans of the crumbling Mexican empire. Fortunately the Mexican force left Tucson and there was no battle. So Cooke is a soldier, a professional, but like Kearney he avoids the fight. He's ready to fight, he's ready to take the town, and I believe that he would have taken the town because of his superiority of leadership, of equipment, firearms, and numbers, even though the Mexican garrison had two small antiquated brass cannon, which all throughout the Mexican war the Mexican's were very, very weak in deploring and using artillery effectively. It would have been an American victory for the Mormon Battalion, but that is of course with some speculation.

Ken: But it showed just how what kind of emotions were that first night of occupying Tucson, if you will. The men are still carrying a full load of ammunition and guards are put out with loaded weapons, and there is a brief glory, isn't there?

Sherman: Right. In Tucson the first evening, there is a fracas of some sort, some relays, actual like when the villagers were coming back to the village, which alarmed the guards, the sentries on post, and the alarm went out and before Cooke knew it, almost the whole battalion had turned out and they were fortunate that no one was killed on their own. But the tension, the nerves were all there. That's just part of combat. The Mexican force had gone down just a few miles to an abandoned mission, but reality, the potential for a fight was still very possible, so everyone was keyed up.

Ken: There are two directions I want to go. I better go back first. We've been talking about a relationship of the men to their commanding officer and a couple of points in time the commanding officer sees it as appropriate to exact justice or to levy a penalty against a member of the battalion, whether it's for a deed of misconduct or dereliction of duty, and this can be anything from being

walked behind the wagon or an officer being forced to walk behind his men, but there are mentions of men being tied at times to wagon wheels as they are stationary, and the men say this is tough military justice or look at what they are doing to us. Help me put this in context of what was the wrong of military justice back in this frontier or any time of war in 1840.

Sherman: Well the military discipline of this era would appall us today. It was a very difficult strenuous stiffing tough institution. Men were subjected to some punishments that are just incredible. Flogging was pretty much gone. It was revived a little bit just prior to the Civil War, still prevalent in the naval service, but there are other creative ways in which commanders could discipline and punish soldiers. They would buck and gag them, set them on the ground, put a rod under their knees by their elbows, draw them together kind of like a little ball, and tie them up like that and put a stick in their mouth and tie it around the back. It's called bucking and gagging. Then they could be tied and spread-eagled on wagon wheels. There is a captain there, Nathaniel Wine, who was killed in the Civil War just after the Mexican War when he was serving at Fort Riley. He had a very unique way to discipline men. He would take the soldiers shirt off to the waist, put a bell over his shoulders so his shoulders and arms were pinned down, the bottom is knocked out then he would pour molasses and syrup all over the soldiers head and force him to march in the heat of the sun all around the post with all the knats and the bugs and the flies, and everything. So this is a very difficult period in that the Mormon men, very religious, very kind, were not used to this type of treatment. Compared to other units the Mormon Battalion got off lightly. They had a few incidences. A couple times Cooke did weed out some punishment, but it wasn't very severe. The men all realized that he was in charge.

Ken: The other direction I want to go to. We were talking about the very real tangible expression of getting ready for combat at Tucson, but the lower associated with the real combat with the battalion, something like the battle of the bulls. Tell me what sticks with you from the notion of the men coming in direct conflict with these wild herds of bulls that were there in the Arizona terrain.

Sherman: As the military historian I've often thought that the situation they had called the battle of the bulls in December '46 down on the San Pedro River was mostly laughable, but I suppose if you are in the path of a thousand and 1,200 pound of bulls and flesh coming at you with sharpened horns, it would get your attention. So this incidence occurred, the cattle running wild throughout the country because of the abandoned Spanish ranches from years gone by, and the smell of blood, shooting one or two of them, panic the others and they charged into camp, upset a couple wagons, gored a couple of the mules, it has become a very much legend and folk lore. It's interesting to mention that among other historians even when we are dealing with 58,000 men dying at Gettysburg, so when you put it in perspective, it is really nothing, but it's their only intense aspect of great danger, and I would suppose that you could get any one's attention if you are being charged by a bull.

Ken: In fact, it did capture the attention of Phillip Saint George Cooke when he stood side by side with a private as a rather nasty piece of beast was bearing down on the two men. Can you recount that incident?

Sherman: Well, as the battle of bulls was raging for the few minutes that it did, one big black bull, I believe it was, was charging right at Colonel Cooke and right next to him was a private Lafayette Frost. Cooke had ordered him to fire and he ordered him to fire again and Lafayette had aimed and was ready to fire but he waited until this bull was within just a few feet and leveled his musket, fired, and that bull dropped right at their feet and Cooke thought the world from then on of Lafayette Frost.

Ken: I'm going to move forward a little bit to the crossing of the Imperial Desert. I'm not giving short

shred to crossing the Colorado and the Helaman River and that area, but I do want to bring this to the sense of arriving in California, but looking at what proves to be one of the most difficult stretches of the march and the march from the Yuma area to what is known as Careva Creek because there is great deprivation in this, the men are giving out, the animals are giving out, shoe leather is long since gone and men are barefoot and they are struggling along. So I'd like to pick up there with this final page. Here they are actually in California. But it's an extraordinary challenge is it not?

Sherman: As the battalion entered into California they crossed the Yuma River and the Colorado at Yuma and then they have to dig wells to find water and they leap frog from well to well. Now General Kearney a few weeks ahead of them had dug a couple of wells, but now they are in a more difficult situation for water and it's just they are reaching their maximum potential here of just exhaustion, lack of food, the routine of the daily march. Now this is in December and January, so it's not the scorching hot summer months, but still during the days it's up in the 70s and 80s in the desert, no water, and their shoes, their clothes, everything is just falling apart, and the shere leadership to keep this unit together, and the men's willingness to obey orders and keep the march. Cooke for the first time makes a couple night marches because he just needs to. He needs to move the battalion along to find more water, and it was probably the most crucial part of the march, at least for water and provisions.

Ken: ... was part of the march, is followed then by one of the most extraordinary rewards of the march. From them I would imagine also so Colonel Cooke. They passed through the last mountain range and the California coastline, arrived at the mission of San Luis Rey, and about one mile away from San Luis Rey they ride upon a bluff and look out and there before them is the Pacific Ocean. They are moved, correct?

Sherman: As the soldiers move along they know that they are marching in California, they know they are part of the war effort, and they know that they are eventually going to hit the Pacific Ocean, so there is a symbol there they are looking for, the waves, the ocean, the water. They know when they see the ocean it's all over. All the hundreds and hundreds of miles, the mountains, the desserts, and they come though San Luis Rey mission, they hear the breaking waves on the beach, and it's just an incredible moment for the men, something they'll never ever forget. To hear the ocean, to see it, they know that the march has come to an end.

Ken: Is that the time that, perhaps that the county itself has been recommended, and their arrival at this time in California in a very real sense seems to tip the scale in the favor of the United States and the proper military authority over California. Can you help simply explain the complex scenario involving Stockton and Fremont and the balance of Carley, California.

Sherman: Well the situation in California was very, very interesting. Lieutenant John C. Fremont was an engineer with a topographical engineer, so that's not a line officer. He's a surveyor assigned as a mapmaker and that's what he is out there doing. He has 40 or 50 men well armed, mostly civilians traveling with him and then the war all of a sudden erupts, California goes through their bear flag republic for three or four weeks, Commodore John Slott shows up, two weeks later he's replaced by Commodore Richard Stockton, and at this point they decide that they are going to control California, and they do. Kearny is coming overland with orders, with authority from the President to be the senior ranking officer in California, serve as military governor. When he arrives, Stockton and Fremont are pretty much in control. They think they've vanquished the Mexicans, but they hadn't because there was a flair up later. Los Angeles was recaptured by the Mexicans, and so there was a circumstance where Kearny was in command and in charge legally but Stockton and John C. Fremont would not recognize this. In fact, Stockton had commissioned without authority Fremont, a lieutenant-colonel

and volunteers. So there is this problem that Kearney faces. There's not much he can do about it. He only has a hundred tragoons and 20 or 30 of them had been killed or wounded at the battle San Presqual. So until the Mormon Battalion arrives in January of 1847, Kearney waits until the time is right for him to exert his authority, which he did. By that time also Commodore Stockton had been replaced by another naval officer and Fremont eventually relinquished his control and the California volunteers, of two or three hundred men are mustered in the service and discharged the same day. When they get back to Fort Leavenworth the next summer, Fremont is arrested, he's charged for insubordination and mutiny. He is court marshaled but President Polk remits the sentence. He resigns from the service.

Ken: One thing I do want touch on, because I don't want to get Fremont too quickly back to Fort Leavenworth because the battalion again plays a pivotal role in when the decision is made by Kearney that Fremont needs to be brought back to Leavenworth. He drove once again to the battalion to provide the guard, does he not?

Sherman: When General Kearney decided to turn command over to Colonel Richard Mason, he also asked Lieutenant Colonel Cooke to accompany him back to the east, and they also assigned fifteen men and soldiers as an escort. So it was a large party, almost a hundred people, many of Fremont's men and Fremont, Dr. Sanderson, the 15 battalion men, Cooke, Kearney and his staff, and so here the battalion played another interesting role to shore up and support General Kearney's authority in an instance if John C. Fremont caused any problems crossing America back east.

Ken: One of the things I find fascinating about the timing is some of the locations that they were called on by their sheer presence to garrison and bring stability to them. It includes not only the key to the missions at San Luis Rey but also San Diego and then the Pueblo of Los Angeles. When ... to give some thoughts to the battalion's reflections on being moved to these key spots in the development of what we consider a new California. What was their role?

Sherman: Well when the Mormon Battalion arrived in California, in southern California, San Diego, they came with occupation forces. The war was still raging in Mexico, and Phillip Scott was still going into Mexico City, but the war in California was pretty much over. It was now an occupation operation, and that is what they did. They went into San Diego for a few days, went to San Luis Rey in February, and then they did their six weeks of training and drilling, which was important for them. Then there was an organization of the military authority there, and General Kearney had split up the battalion with Colonel Cooke in their different segments. Four companies went to Los Angeles where they helped build Fort Moore, which was the first permanent U. S. military installation in California, and then B Company went to San Diego. So they were in an occupation mode at this time where they still trained and they drilled and did the soldiery things, but then they also got involved in construction and humanitarian things as we do today in the army. Building homes, building wells, making brick, and then building the big fort, fortifications up in Los Angeles, Fort Moore.

Ken: This was also a first opportunity for the vast majority, in fact for the entire membership of the Mormon Battalion, to experience a substantially different culture as they come on this trek through the American Southwest. Matching the Spanish culture belts as the Spanish missionary Catholicism, a Franciscan mission type of culture, and from what I've read in the journals that they are struck at times by what they're seeing, which advocate has been invaded as he reach forth more than 200 years at the time that they arrived. Do you have any recollections or are you impressed with what their seems to curtail.

Sherman: Part of soldering is visiting near and different peoples and lands, whether it be in America or somewhere else. So in Santa Fe and also in California, they are letting soldiers see the Spanish missions, Mexican people, they attended their fandango, they went to parties, they did all these things. They attended the Catholic Church. They were very much involved in that culture at that time. There's quite a few comments in the journals about the good and the bad that they recorded, they saw, they experienced. It was an enlightening experience for most of them - most of them being from the middle states, New England, and some of the southern states. So to experience a foreign language, foreign dress, new culture, and just the way woman, children, and families behave differently in these areas was just fascinating for them.

Ken: As they neared the end of their term of service, their commanding officer, Phillip Saint George Cooke, a man who at times had a rocky relationship with the men, but it now comes to a different appreciation of what they had accomplished. Right and border, and basically what it is, you know it's a very, you might call it offensive now, but at least Phillip Saint George Cooke pens an order, which is really a message to these men that he's been through so much with these men over this period of time. What does he tell the men in that order?

Sherman: The congratulation order? Cooke just laid out a marvelous letter to the men thanking them, praising them, and just almost like being the coach. Guys, we won the state championship, and it was just wonderful the way he wrote it and laid it out. He had it read to the men and he talked about what they had done together and where they had traveled and what they had done and what it would mean to the United States and how they should feel proud about themselves and he used that beautiful line that history may be searched in vain for an equal march of infantry. And he goes on to catalog some of the circumstances and I think it's just a wonderful thing that the men rallied around him. He also wrote dispatches at that time and later praising the regular army lieutenants, George Stoneman and Andrew Jackson Smith for their great service, and because of that both of them received honorary ranks and promotions to the next grade.

Ken: Now ... sometimes a harsh individual not given to flowering phrases of praise that he would ... I would imagine coming from this man there is even more significance to the recognition of his battalion friends.

Sherman: Yes, Kirkham, he was interesting. There were many officers of that era that just didn't praise soldiers very often. They were expected to do their duty, they performed, and that's it. So the idea of going down the call of duty is not a term or future that was known at this time, but Cooke thanked the men and he appreciated their service. So it was doubly important. They may not have realized it at the time, but seen from Cooke's journal, many wrote his report and then later when he wrote this book, 30 years later in 1878, the conquest of California and New Mexico, and he had much praise for the battalion men. He calls it like he sees it with their shortcomings and weaknesses, but he also gives them great credit for their service.

Ken: Your colleagues of military historians attempt sometimes have been and continue to be dismissive of the Mormon Battalion. It did not wage a great battle. ...or storming the gates of Mexico City, and yet you in your analysis see great merit, great importance in this undertaking by this group of ... that became known as the Mormon Battalion. Why does it hold that significance? What is the significance that it holds for you?

Sherman: Military historians kind of glossed over the Mormon Battalion because it's a victim of historical obscurity. It was in the Mexican War, which for many people is an unpopular war, war of

aggression. It is so close to the great Civil War. It was a side show theater going out to California under Kearney, and then we got a group of Mormons that didn't fight in combat, therefore what could it provide? What significance is the Mormon Battalion? I think it's really significant. It's a religious unit. These men served to help out their religion, their church. Yes, patriotism, loyal to their country is on there also, but more so it was a religious unit, which is so unique, and they gave up so much. They sacrificed so much. Soldiers sacrifice period, but their families were on the plains, they marched all the way to California. They did all these things and then they came back and they'd made such a significant impact on later American history down in that area; Arizona, New Mexico, the Gadsden purchase, Cooke's wagon road, all these things, Mormons were involved, etc. Now after their discharge in the finding of gold. There's all these things that occur, but as a military historian, this is one of those treasured gems that most people don't know about. They just haven't come across it because it hasn't been publicized beyond the L.D.S. world that much.

Ken: One of the aspects I find terribly intriguing is your work in trying to cut through the layers of mess and romanticism that were wrapped around the potential story, which I believe is not in need of any greater romanticizing or any mythology because the essential prove of the story, but it's been reinterpreted and then re-reinterpreted, and then re-re-reinterpreted, and I would like to speak to one of the interpretations that emerges in the 1850s. I like the characterization of how the battalion was brought together. In the 1850s there are statements being made that the loaded gun was put at their head, you were forced to raise the battalion as Latter Day Saints. Did you happen to read one of these we were forced to do it and that we would have been spit upon and killed to a person had we not raised the battalion. How do you explain that sentiment to the merges..... you know in that period of being ... and then to the reality ...?

Sherman: One, the commonly held beliefs that the Mormon Battalion and its creation and the idea behind it was something that came about completely from the blue, that Latter Day Saints had no knowledge, no involvement, nothing. We know that is not true. Jessie Little was sent back by Brigham Young to serve in the Eastern states to do church business but also find out or develop a way to get support and money to help in the exodus. It turned out to be a military operation. So when Brigham Young learned about it, it was just an obvious wonderful benefit for him. Any historical event has its share of myths and legends that come out. One of them of course is what I call the prevention theory. That is basically two components. One is if Brigham Young and the church did not enlist the battalion, then the U.S. army, and militia's from Missouri and other states would come upon the Saints and destroy them. That is the first component. The second component was a rumor started by Governor Thomas Ford in late 1845, where he had written a letter and said that in order to get the Saints out of Illinois as soon as possible, he was trying to emphasize the importance of them leaving and that they would, if they tried to leave the confines in the United States, go to join with Mexico or with the British up in Canada, then they would be prevented from doing so. It was just the way he was trying to trick them into leaving Illinois as soon as possible. The interesting thing about this prevention period is that though there is no truth, no evidence that any of this happened, Polk had his hands full marshaling the army he needed for Mexico, why would he take more resources and men and go destroy the Saints. It's just incredible. It's unbelievable. The Saints believed it. They really truly believe that there was a conspiracy to destroy them, either by leaving the United States or by not organizing the battalion. This became part of the mythology later after the battalion was discharged, they settled in Utah, and things of this nature. It's one of those episodes that didn't happen.

Ken: One thing that did happen was the value of the men who served in the battalion to the survival and enhancement, if you will, of the seven and third grade basis. The men who survived with the Mormon Battalion proved to be very, very handy and very, very constructive in building up the

kingdom, in the great basin. Tell me how their experience in the military came into play and came into being of such importance to others in the Latter Day Saints.

Sherman: After their military service the men united with their families and they eventually got to Utah. What they learned in the army was important. They saw irrigation and things of raising crops down in Arizona that the Indians used that they utilized also. And they just became a hard and tough group. They were ultimate pioneers. They were obedient. They were disciplined, and they served in the Utah militia when the Nauvoo legion was here in Utah and they served well and they understood some of the military practices and it gave them a real edge. Having worked firearms, retaining them was important, 500 muskets for the arsenal out here in Utah, so that was another important thing, but one thing is it solidified their faith in their leadership. It also solidified their trust and loyalty to the United States, I think.

Ken: Can I ask you a question ... being service in the Nauvoo legion and the very first line in your manuscript ... is along the lines that of victory loves irony. I can think nothing more ironic, more and more pointed than to consider the period of 1857 and 1858, when a different United States President, Buchanan, believed a report and declares that there is an insurrection, a rebellion including Utah, and marches troops out to quell that rebellion and install a new territorial governor. This brings two armed groups face to face and they include the 2nd trogons and they include the Nauvoo region. What we got is old comrades in arms coming face to face do we not? Tell me the story.

Sherman: One of the ironies of later history of the Mormon Battalion is that in 1857, ten years after their discharge, the Utah War, the Utah Expedition occurred, which is interesting because President James Buchanan sent out 2,500 troops under Colonel Albertson E. Johnston to quell a rebellion that was not occurring and to install a new governor, a territorial governor, Alfred Cumming. So the military aspect in this, the commander of the 2nd U.S. trogons, which was farther behind the rest of the main body, was Colonel Phillip Saint George Cooke, and many of the men of the Nauvoo region, the Utah territorial militia, was going out to fight, at least point burn wagons, run off stock, and impede their progress, were men who served with him in the Mormon Battalion, James Ferguson, Lot Smith, Ephraim Hanks, many of these men, and I'm sure it was gut wrenching for them to realize that there were men in the professional regular army that they had served with are new, and Cooke being the chief individual. It's kind of a preface or preview of four years later when the American Civil War occurred, father against son, brother against brother. Cooke's own family was divided during the Civil War. A son and nephew were generals in the confederacy and he was a general in the federal army.

Ken: Do you put much stock in the story that is often told about the day when U.S. troops actually started the occupation of Great Salt Lake City and started to march through town and the course of the story is told that there were members of the Nauvoo legion that were left behind to fire the building, shoot the army, break it's promise, and try to occupy the town? They were going to fix up the buildings and that one of the key people who maintained his foot order had as a sign of respect is Colonel Phillip Saint George Cooke. Do you put any stock in that story?

Sherman: As the soldiers were moving out to Utah, the regular army soldiers, they came up with own little quips and points about the Mormons and they were going to hang Brigham Young from the sour apple tree and all this, it's typical soldier talk. There's language that is used so the next summer in 1858 when they marched through Salt Lake City, it was an interesting situation because most Saints had left the city. The city was ready to be fired and burnt and scorched as policy, but as the 2nd trogons came through, from what we have in many records, is that Colonel Cooke took off his hat and more or less paid homage or saluted the Saints and their capital city as he rode through. I believe that

happened. Later he and other officers later met Brigham Young in his office and had a social hour with him, where Colonel Albertson and Johnston refused to go because of his prejudice.

Ken: But the kind of greatest contribution of any previous nation, singular, and ask you to narrow it down, why should they be "remembered" with the latest generation?

Sherman: The Mormon Battalion can be remembered and honored for many, many things. There are many stories, but to me the fact that it was a religious unit that was marshaled for war, most of the men, except for a few, from the same religion, they joined for religious purposes, they had a religious designation, the Mormon Battalion, is the most unique story to be told. There are many stories the woman and children, the march, the service, so many things, but from a military point of view since the battalion did not participate in combat, the fact that the federal government would organize a unit of soldiers from one denomination and there was so much religion spliced into that service, it's just fascinating. It would never happen today.

Ken: One of the great and most repeated traits associated with the Mormon Battalion is the longest march ever recorded by the U.S. military, perhaps any military in history. Put that one in perspective for me.

Sherman: The march of the Mormon Battalion was not the longest march in military history or United States history. Now Colonel Cooke wrote that "history may be searched in vain for an equal march of infantry." I don't think he had a distance in miles in mind. I think he was thinking of the difficulty of the terrain, the nature of where they went through and all that they faced. But there were much longer marches and the length of the march is really not that important, but Alexander the Great in ancient times marched 22,000 miles or more over a ten-year period. In one year he marched 2,800 miles, 30,000 Macedonian soldiers, hoplites, wearing sandals and leggings and this and so on. Napoleon in 1812 left his base of operations in Germany and invaded Russia. Some of those units came from Spain, so they marched at least 15 or 18 hundred miles just to Russia and then at least that distance back. The march of the Mormon Battalion is under 2,000 miles from most authorities, about 1,900 maybe 1,950. In the Utah war period in 1857 and then in 1858, eight companies of the 6th U.S. infantry was to reinforce the soldiers at Fort Bridger as they moved into the valley in '58. They left Fort Leavenworth, they marched all the way to Fort Bridger, the settlement had occurred, Brigham Young had stepped down, so they were ordered on to Oregon country, the entire Oregon trail, 2,200 miles more. Several of those companies of the 6th U.S. infantry in Oregon territory the remainder of that year marched several hundred more miles up and down the coast patrolling and doing military operations. In 1933 or 34. I believe it was, Mose de Tong and the Chinese made the longest march over 6,000 miles all through China. So there's long marches in American history, in World History. The Mormon Battalion march, it's not so much the length in miles, but it's a march of endurance and preservation and it is just an incredible march where they went through.

Ken: Can we still feel the impact, do they have a lingering contribution of that march?

Sherman: Yes, absolutely, the march of the Mormon Battalion, who cares about the miles, it's just what it represented and what it provided and what it contributed. The Gaston purchase, a lot of that territory they went through, Kirk's wagon road, even though he got to California with only three or four wagons or the 25 he started out with, he still carved the wagon road and it is a great story any way you look at it.

