



Captain Nelson during his service in the Korean War.

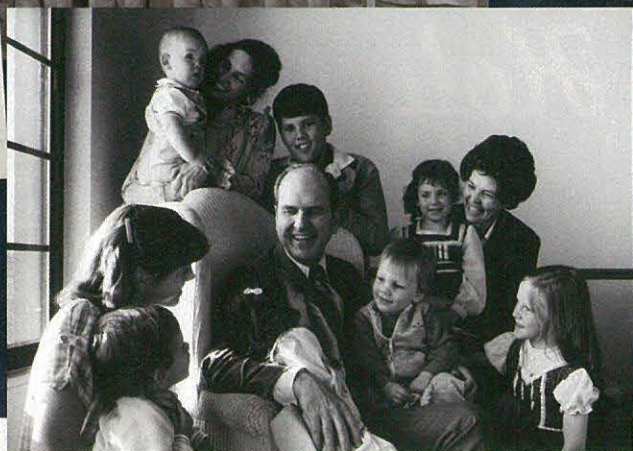


Russell M. Nelson married Dantzel White on August 31, 1945.

"That is a totally inappropriate answer for someone who has read the Book of Mormon," Lieutenant Nelson responded.



Russell (second row, third from left) with his fellow interns in Minneapolis.



Russell surrounded by loving family members.



Russell's family, including his first son and first grandchild.

"YOU DIDN'T READ IT, DID YOU?"

Editor's Note: During the Korean War and one year shy of finishing his residency and earning his PhD, Dr. Nelson enlisted in the army and was transferred to active duty in Korea shortly after the birth of his and his first wife, Dantzel's, second daughter, Wendy. The following story occurred when he was part of a M.A.S.H. unit during that war.

Young Lieutenant Nelson performed many operations in less-than-optimal conditions. One day a nurse named Beverly Ashcraft approached him at the end of an operation in which she had assisted him. "What makes you different from all the other surgeons I work with?" she asked, likely assuming that he would have a straightforward answer.

Dr. Nelson thought for a moment and responded much differently than she expected: "Well, I don't know that I'm different, but if I am, it's because I know the Book of Mormon is true."

Not only was Beverly not expecting that answer, she was not impressed with it. It was only out of a sense of duty that she accepted Dr. Nelson's offer to borrow the one and only copy of the Book of Mormon he had at the time. Her husband, Derwin, was a fellow surgeon, and a few days later he returned the book, tossed it to Russell, and muttered a feeble "thanks."

"That is a totally inappropriate answer for someone who has read the Book of Mormon," Lieutenant Nelson responded. "You didn't read it, did you? I'm asking you and Beverly to read it, and when you have, then I want my book back."

The Ashcrafts did read the book, and, over a period of time, Lieutenant Nelson taught them the gospel. In 1951, he baptized them, and then he lost track of the Ashcrafts.

Fast-forward 30 years to when Russell Nelson had become Elder Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who had just been asked to take a last-minute assignment to fill in for Elder Neal A. Maxwell at a stake conference in Tennessee. Elder Nelson

headed for Tennessee, arriving at the airport where members greeted him with "Welcome to Tennessee, Elder Maxwell" signs.

During the Sunday morning session of the conference, Elder Nelson was drawn to a woman wearing a large hat and sitting on the left-hand side of the chapel. He asked the stake president who she was; the president didn't know but managed to learn that her name was Beverly Zitting. When Elder Nelson went to the pulpit, he felt prompted to call this woman to join him. "How long have you been a member of the Church?" he asked her with the congregation looking on.

"Thirty years," she responded.

"Who baptized you?" he then asked.

After a brief pause, she answered, "You did, in 1951."

"What is your name again?"

She explained that when Elder Nelson had baptized her, her name had been Beverly Ashcraft and her husband's name Derwin. After he died, she had remarried, and now she had a large family who were active in the Church.

"Beverly, how many people connected with you have come into the Church since I baptized you?" Elder Nelson asked.

"You won't believe this," she told him and the congregation, "but two nights ago I had a dream that Elder Maxwell would ask me that very question." So she had come prepared, and she pulled out of her purse a paper with the names of all the people who had come into the Church as a result of her baptism. The number was 80.

During subsequent years, Beverly would visit Elder Nelson in his office at Church headquarters at least twice. On the last visit, she was accompanied by children and grandchildren wishing to thank Elder Nelson for baptizing their mother and grandmother. By that time, the number of those who had joined the Church as a result of her baptism was 300. And counting.