Francis Marion Gibbons

April 10, 1921 ~ July 16, 2016

Francis Marion Gibbons, age 95, an emeritus General Authority of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, died at home in his sleep on July 16, 2016, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was born on April 10, 1921, in the small town of St. Johns, Arizona, to Judge Andrew Smith Gibbons and Adeline Christensen Gibbons. Known as Frank by his family and friends, he grew up in St. Johns and later in Phoenix, the youngest of five children.

A great watershed moment in Frank's life occurred in December of 1940, when his beloved father was killed in an auto-pedestrian accident. Almost wholly inactive in the Church, Frank was shocked and left bereft by this tragedy. Then, a few days after the funeral, Frank's mother came into his bedroom early on a Sunday morning, greatly agitated. She told the nineteen year old that his deceased father had just appeared to her in her bedroom and delivered this succinct message: "Go and get the boy up and get him to priesthood meeting!" This event marked a great turning point in not only Frank's life, but also the lives of the entire family, who returned to activity in the Church.

A year later Frank served a mission to the Southern States. While on his mission, Frank began the habit of keeping a detailed daily diary, which he continued throughout his life, ultimately filling seventy-five volumes comprising over seven million words, with entries spanning the period from January 2, 1942, until a few months before his death. These diaries have been donated to the Church.

After his mission, Frank served as an officer in the U.S. Navy during World War II. On June 7, 1945, he married Helen Bay in the Salt Lake Temple, and they became the parents of four children,ÄîSuzanne, Mark, Ruth, and Daniel. Frank studied at the University of Utah and Stanford University. Following law school, Frank practiced law in Salt Lake City for nineteen years with the firm of Senior and Senior, and Frank and Helen purchased a home on Yale Avenue in the Yalecrest Ward of the Bonneville Stake. During those years, Frank served in the Church as a guide on Temple Square, stake mission president, high councilor, stake executive secretary, and as bishop of the Yalecrest Ward.

A second great turning point in Frank's life occurred in April of 1970 when he was asked by the First Presidency to leave his law practice and serve as the secretary to the First Presidency. Thus began a central focus of Frank's life,Äîto sit at the feet of the Prophets of God as their faithful scribe and secretary and to offer his humble witness of their inspired callings. He served the First Presidency for sixteen years under the administrations of Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, and Ezra Taft Benson, and also worked closely with future Church Presidents Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson.

In 1971 Frank was called as the president of the Bonneville Stake. In this capacity he sought to inspire the stake members to develop their hidden talents, and striving to heed his own counsel, he decided to try his hand at writing

a biography of Joseph Smith. His book Joseph Smith: Martyr, Prophet of God was published in 1977, and Frank went on to write biographies of all of the Presidents of the Church. It is difficult to gauge Frank's lasting impact as a writer at this close distance, but BYU's "Mormon Literature Database" has identified "Sixty Significant Mormon Biographies," thirteen of which are authored by Frank.

In 1986 Frank was called as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and within weeks he and Helen found themselves living in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where they resided for the next three years. Frank was determined to become fluent in Portuguese, which he accomplished, conducting his leadership interviews and preaching to the Saints in their language. Released from active service as a General Authority at age seventy, Frank was called by the Quorum of the Twelve to serve as Patriarch at Large for the Church, giving blessings at Church headquarters to those who lived outside the boundaries of stakes. In this capacity he gave many hundreds of blessings to Saints from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and other remote corners of the globe. During this time he also served as the Ensign Stake Patriarch.

Helen and Frank spent the final decades of their long lives in Canyon Road Towers near Temple Square, where they each had a private study to pursue their research and writing. After seventy years of marriage, Helen predeceased Frank on August 2, 2015, at the age of 93.

In his old age Frank slowed down physically, but remained sharp mentally, and he continued to write. Four final volumes were published in the last months of his life, including a biography of President Howard W. Hunter, a book of missionary experiences, a book on the life and ministry of the Savior, and Frank's autobiography, entitled On to the Pole.

Frank is survived by his children: Suzanne Bay Gibbons Burton (Tim), Mark Bay Gibbons (Shari), Ruth Bay Gibbons Stoneman (Allen), and Daniel Bay Gibbons (Julie); 18 grandchildren; and 42 great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his wife, Helen Bay Gibbons.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, July 23, 2016, at 11:00 a.m. at the Ensign Stake Center, 135 A Street, Salt Lake City, Utah. A viewing will be held on Friday, July 22, 2016, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Larkin Mortuary, 260 E. South Temple, and the day of the service at the church from 9:30 to 10:40 a.m. He will be interred at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, 1342 East 500 South, Salt Lake City.