

College Football-Lehi's Passion

By John K. Haws Jr.

Look there is President Thomas S Monson (President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) singing on television. He is singing the University of Utah Fight Song:

***Who am I, sir,
A Utah Man am I!
A Utah Man, sir,
Will be 'til I die.
Ki-yi!***

President Monson who was an alumnus of the University of Utah was shown at a University of Utah Football game being interviewed and sang the song for the cameras. He along with many fans from Lehi filled the stadium to root for their home team.

I always loved to hear the stories from Ned Wilson and Lane Downs, the stories of their tailgating parties with members of the old First ward at the BYU football games. Each week these stalwarts would make the journey and have a barbeque from the back of Lane's van or motorhome. They would dine on dutch oven chicken or ribs with all the trimmings. Nancy Stewart once told me that she got her best meal each week at the tailgating party. Dressed in blue and white, they would be there to cheer on their favorite college football team.

All us kids learned from an early age the Cougar fight song. We would sing it at school and we knew each week if BYU won or lost. Everyone had at least one Cougar or Utah t-shirt that they would wear. We didn't have much television when I was young and the games were not televised.

I remember when color television came to Lehi. It didn't come for my family. I think the first color television in Lehi was in the home of Paul and Frances Comer. They were our neighbors and lived across the street. I remember that NBC

was starting to have shows in color. One of the first events to have color coverage was the Rose Parade and the football games on New Years Day. It became a tradition that each New Years, they would invite us over across the street to watch all the parade and games on color television. This was an exciting time for the Haws family. We would go over and watch with Blaine, Janice and Kent the parade and then watch all of the Bowl games, the Sugar Bowl, the Rose Bowl and the Orange Bowl college football. It was on that New Years Day each year when I gained my love for college football. I remember how colorful their uniforms were and how green the grass was on real color television. Each New Years, I have to watch the parade and bowl games and have grilled cheese sandwiches.

Another factor of my love of College Football, was because of my dear friend and employer Doyle Kohler. He always had season tickets for four people to the BYU football games. He loved BYU sports. He was the hardest working man I ever have met, but BYU sports was one of the few things that could get him away from his work. Doyle gave me the opportunity to attend BYU football games with him for many years. I always was able to see three or four games a year with him. His tickets were on the fifty yard line and right down at a perfect angle to see the game. Each time, we would get into his jeep and race through the thousands of other Lehi cars plus all those from all areas of the state going to the game.

We would see hundreds of people from Lehi. They were all season holders bringing their boys and families to the game of all games. I will never forget this experience with my dear friend and hold those times very special. There were times when Doyle would give all the tickets to me and I was able to take my sons to at least one game a year. Each year my boys and I try to attend at least one game in this tradition. It is always a great tradition. A couple of years ago, TCU came to BYU and literally trounced the Cougars. By the beginning of the third quarter there was hardly anyone around us. My sons and I stay to the end yelling and rising to shout. Doyle was one of the finest men I have ever met.

All of us have experienced the thrill of the BYU and Utah rivalry. On those days, almost every television in Lehi, was tuned to watch the game if they were not

watching it in person. Lehi has experienced every moment from the National Championship to some terrible seasons and poor showing in bowl games. Each year Lehighites are there yelling for their team. On the week of the big game most students either wore their red Ute shirts or their blue Cougar shirts and most Elementary students were in heated debate on who was going to win the game.

College Football began in 1869. The first college football game was between Princeton and Rutgers. They had a two game season.

College Football came to Utah in 1892 when the University of Utah started playing the games. In fact the University of Utah has the nation's best record in Bowl games at 13-4. BYU Football had a much rockier start. BYU started with their first games in 1896, but in 1903 the program was terminated. It wasn't again revived until 1922.

In 1905, College Football was faced with a crisis. The game had become so brutal that more than a hundred players had been killed playing football that season. College Presidents were terminating the program as BYU did in 1903. State Legislatures had passed laws making college football illegal in their states. The United States Congress had pending legislation to outlaw college football in the United States.

Theodore Roosevelt was president at this time. He was a president of action. He loved college football. His son played for Harvard and he would go watch his son play. He realized that College Football was in trouble and would be outlawed if he didn't do something.

President Roosevelt called for radical changes to the sport to make it safer for the participants. He gave them an ultimatum to make college football safer or he would ban the sport. The directors of College Football opposed any changes to the sport. Newspaper editorialized that Roosevelt's actions were too radical. He decided he better take action or the sport would be outlawed.

He called a meeting of all those involved in the decision and got them into one place and during the meeting made the necessary changes to save college football. The President was there and representatives of Congress. The leadership of college football was there and representatives of states and the press.

In a short period, radical changes took place. The forward pass was legalized in 1906 season. They felt this would open up the field, reducing dangerous mass collisions in the middle of the field. They outlawed holding and unnecessary roughness and brought penalties for these actions. They also increased the required first down yardage from five yards to the ten yards we have today. There were a lot of rules dealing with forward passing that no longer apply, as the forward pass has become an important part of college football.

As we all line up our cars in the weekly ritual of heading to the football stadiums, or watching it on Saturday afternoons from our homes, we have to give thanks to a President who saved football and gave us the forward pass. He jumped to it and had the task completed for the next football season. Lehi has always had a passion and will continue to have a passion for College Football in the years to come.