

SYLVIA'S CORNER

OLYMPICS IN SALT LAKE

Well, the Olympics have come and gone. The question I have is whether or not the Mormon Church has accomplished it's purpose. No doubt, if ever subtly, lots of attention was brought to Mormonism. You couldn't help but see the Mormon Temple in the background over and over again. The Tabernacle Choir performed many times on various programs during the course of the games. The Mormon pioneers were depicted in the opening ceremonies, and Gordon B. Hinckley, the President of the church, was interviewed on many occasions.

While watching the Today show, I saw an interview with Mr. Hinckley. He said that it was not the intention of the church to proselytize. He said that the Mormons were hardworking, honest people. In the next shot, as he was talking about the church welfare program, there was a shot of the Relief Society (women's organization), with a lot of seemingly happy, attractive women making bread. He mentioned the genealogy program. He also used the term often heard, "Peculiar People", when referring to church members.

There were approximately 8,000 to 10,000 journalists expected for the games. Most of them arrived about four days ahead of the viewers and athletes. This gave them plenty of time to look around. A week in advance, interviews with the twelve apostles were granted to over four hundred of those reporters. There was a reception area in the Joseph Smith Center prepared for them to use in their reporting. They had refreshments, computer terminals, phone cards, and access to the Internet available to accommodate them. Parking was also provided.

In the Jewish Community Center, on the occasions of both the opening and closing ceremonies, there were two parties hosted by Mayor Rocky Anderson. Country representatives of the various countries were invited, as well as the Chairs of each Community council. Dozens of Salt Lake residents that were supposedly randomly selected from each city and zip code were asked to come. What great P.R.!!! Especially if the people selected spoke a foreign language that they learned while on a mission. (Maybe I just have a suspicious mind!)

Did you hear it like I did, over and over? "Mormonism is not a cult."

The Mormon people were told not to openly witness to people, unless asked. Members of the church were told to be nice to the tourists. If people went to Temple Square and

asked questions, the workers were told to refer those people to church officials. The plan was to go low key and answer questions about the church only when asked. Missionaries were not standing around.

Another change was the fact that the church was now calling itself the Church of Jesus Christ without the Latter-day Saints as part of the name.

The Book of Mormon was reportedly missing from the Resource Center.

According to President Hinckley, the P.R. campaign that the Mormons would have would be a campaign not to campaign. They were told just to go above and beyond the call of duty whenever possible.

Over and over again, from Gordon B. Hinckley and others, a prophecy from Brigham Young, one of the first Presidents of the church, was quoted. Brigham Young cited a prophecy stemming from the book of Isaiah in the Bible, where Zion would be established on the tops of the mountains, and Kings and Emperors would visit there. He was referring to Salt Lake, but Isaiah was referring to Jerusalem. Here's how the scripture reads in the N.I.V. Bible. "In the last days the mountain of the LORD'S temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it." This scripture is repeated in Micah 4:1-3, and clearly refers to Jerusalem, not Salt Lake City.

Remember back when you were a child? If you were told not to do something or go somewhere, didn't it peak your curiosity just a little, just like the analogy of the kid in the candy store? What about those being shown the outside of the temple? "Here's the temple, but you can't go in there." I wonder if that works. I hope not!

The question is, did their plan work? Did it accomplish what they wanted it to? Do Mormons look just like everyone else, only more helpful, friendly, and accommodating? Only time will tell.