



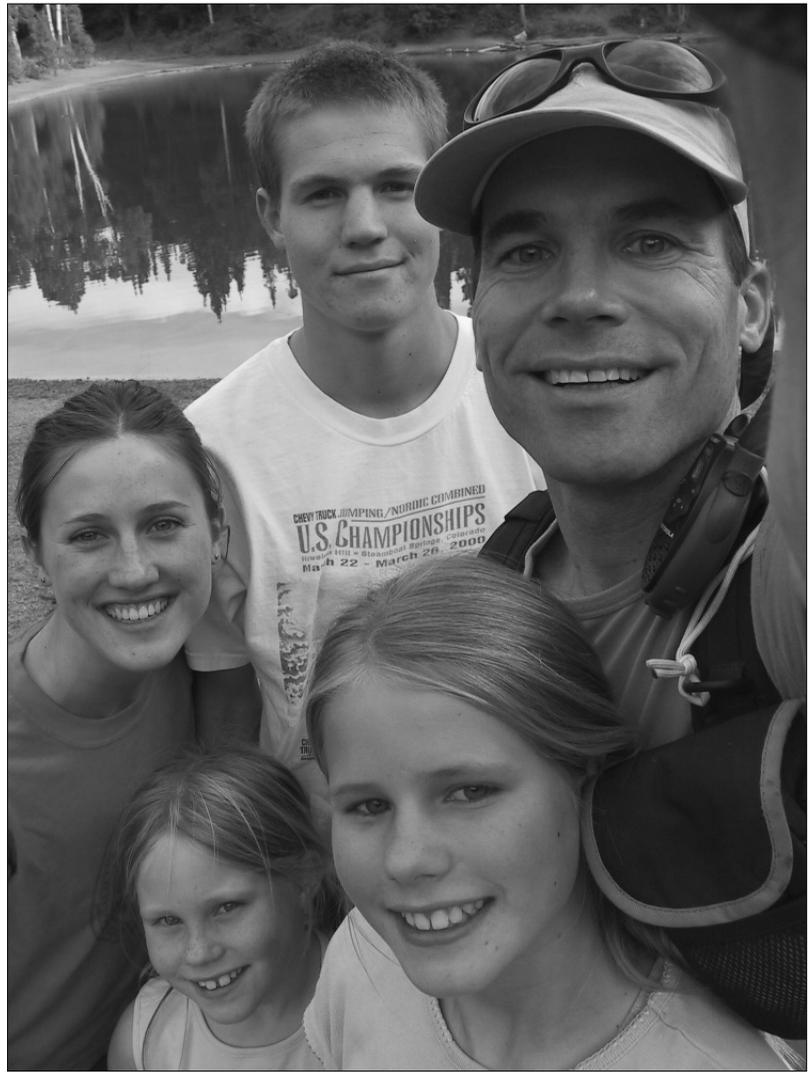
Daniel Hart

In Memoriam



1956-2002

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I N M E M O R I A M

DANIEL HARTMAN RECTOR

By *Elbert Eugene Peck*

WITHOUT DANIEL RECTOR, Sunstone would not be alive. And now, without Daniel our sunlight is less: he shined so! While climbing Mt. Superior in Utah's Little Cottonwood Canyon with a friend early on the morning of 4 September 2002, Daniel died as he lived—engaging life with passion and joy.

In 1986, after a futile year of trying to recruit a successor, the great but burned-out SUNSTONE editor Peggy Fletcher, in desperation, announced her departure date, leaving the organization's fate uncertain, and many insiders predicted demise without the great leader. At Peggy's farewell banquet, needing to announce some succession, the search committee punted with an unknown—the part-time business manager Sunstone had hired only three months earlier. When the name Daniel H. Rector was announced as the new Foundation president, there were gasps and whispered doubts. Would the son of a General Authority try to remake SUNSTONE into the *Ensign*?

But Daniel had the right stuff, barrels of it: self-confidence, intelligence, passion, and pure energy. After going on a bike ride with Daniel, Mormon cartoonist Pat Bagley, who runs marathons, said he wasn't sure about going again: "Daniel's idea of fun is racing up a 90-degree incline!" Daniel gave the same to Sunstone, and he immediately began rebuilding and recruiting. After three days of relentless lobbying, Daniel persuaded me to join his team, and for the next five years we worked in a joyful companionship as publisher and editor.

Those early days were hard. Every office system had to be recreated. Even when we had to work for months out of boxes and furniture stacked in a basement hall, Daniel was cheerful, plodding one by one through his infinite list of tasks. While draining the swamp, we looked at the stars and dreamed grand possibilities for Sunstone and the Church. He



wanted to start a Sunstone theological bookstore/cafe that would host regular speakers and be the main hang-out for Mormon intellectuals. He loved being with people of good will and discussing good things.

Daniel's achievements were considerable. He staged regular, new-subscriber mass-mailings that offered free books to names on every mailing list he could get. Sunstone was deep in debt, owing almost two hundred thousand dollars to creditors and the IRS. The IRS agreed to his payment plan only after they made it clear Daniel would lose his house if it weren't met. But when the bill collectors called, and they called *all day long*, he'd calmly say, "Well, we're broke. I can pay you two thousand dollars if you'll call our eight-thousand-dollar bill paid." His boldness awed us, but it just seemed normal to him—just stating the truth. He was similarly bold in asking supporters to donate outrageous amounts. His multi-year, semi-annual, "put-Sunstone-in-the-black" fundraising campaign made giving annually a habit for many that continues to this day. Monthly, he graphed his progress, and when

he left, Sunstone was in the black, no one minded answering the phone any more, and subscribers numbered the most ever.

This behind-the-scenes work was often not fun, but Daniel made working at Sunstone fun. And while penny-pinching, Sunstone expanded. Regional symposiums multiplied, and the Salt Lake symposium's speakers and attendees grew in number and breadth. Daniel made the selling of conference tapes popular and profitable. He particularly enjoyed organizing the monthly scripture lecture series, for he loved careful scriptural scholarship. Those heady years were full of achievements, friendships, ideas, growth, and passion. Daniel made it all possible: he'd laugh and joke and listen and share—and work. Each year everything came together at the symposium's closing hymn. Exhausted, Daniel would sing boisterously, get teary-eyed, and run around hugging everyone: his beliefs, his work, and his friends were all joined in one.

DANIEL was easy to like. He prized friendship and loved deeply. He ranks among the most honest people—ever. Sometimes I wished he would learn the language of diplomacy, for his straightforwardness unintentionally, and usually unknowingly, would occasionally offend people. He was pained when he learned of it, and he'd rush to make amends. But he didn't change his style. Daniel had no guile. He didn't obscure or boast or plot or pretend or hold grudges; he was as he appeared, and he assumed the same about others. I came to value his candor, and I am more honest because of his friendship. He didn't cover his mistakes or try to justify them. Void of traditional Mormon guilt, he was comfortable with his flawed humanness while he worked hard on improving himself.

Working with him was sweet collaboration, each of us engaging the other in big-picture and picky-detail conversations about the other's tasks. Such cross-fertilization strengthened Sunstone and deepened our personal love and respect. After spending a

ELBERT EUGENE PECK was editor of SUNSTONE from 1986–2001. The picture on the facing page is of Elbert and Daniel at the end of a symposium.

weekend reading Lynn Packer's manuscript detailing Elder Paul H. Dunn's fictionalized war and baseball stories, Daniel gathered the staff and shared his impressions. It had been a hell of a weekend, he said. Elder Dunn was a family friend, and the allegations deeply troubled him. He had done some investigation to confirm the facts. "Is it true?" he concluded. "And, if so, should it be published?" There was a long silence, then he said: "Yes. And yes." Others approached such topics with judgment and anger; Daniel engaged them with honesty and compassion.



LIKE most, Daniel had his hobby-horse theologies, but he did not ride them often in public nor impose them on others. He liked ideas, but he liked people more. And through working with Sunstone's readers, donors, and participants, he made many dear friends. Rooted in personal epiphanies, at the core of his theology was grace. Some who knew a younger Daniel say he had a strong, annoying, self-confident, self-righteous streak, which could be quite imposing. The Book of Mormon tells us to be bold but not overbearing (Alma 38:12); that combination was a work of grace in Daniel. By the time I met him, grace had wrought in him his trademark, guilt-free repenting heart and a humility about his abilities that demanded action, required truthfulness, and cultivated an impressive tolerance for the divergent paths of others. He had no desire to remake others into his image of God and grace. Once when we were discussing the public fall and humiliation of a prominent Salt Lake Mormon, Daniel expressed sadness about the affair that had hurt so many, but he eschewed shame and judgment, accepting human messiness as the unavoidable and glorious consequence of being human and through which grace works.

Since the office at Sunstone was one big room partitioned by six-foot high dividers, without trying, one heard at least snippets of everyone's phone conversations (and more if they were interesting). But when Daniel was talking with his wife, Lisa, the rest of us wished we couldn't hear anything at all—too much information. His raw honesty and candor in their relationship was as breathtaking as it was unnerving, and so was his love. His open and adult conversations with his children were the envy of every parent in the office. During those first years when I,

being single, spent most nights and weekends at the office, to his credit Daniel went home to his family. He knew his priorities; in fact, he was climbing early in the morning on the day he fell and died so he could spend that evening with them.

SUNSTONE expanded under Daniel, and he had the good fortune to leave it just before the wave crested. As with all of the preceding Sunstone gurus, he left because he couldn't support his family on his scant salary. Some speculated that he left because of the stress surrounding the General Authority "Statement on Symposia," which had followed the 1991 Salt Lake symposium. I don't believe it. A week before the symposium, he proposed that we go out for lunch. In quirky Daniel fashion, for some reason, he was determined to dine at a well-known "private club" (meaning it serves liquor), although neither of us were a club member nor drank alcohol. After we had ordered, and just as Daniel began to speak, some announcer-guy broadcasted, "Well, you all know what today is—it's our monthly lingerie show!" So, while Daniel is detailing his painful decision to leave Sunstone, there are a swarm of scantily clad women hovering around us. That memory embodies for me so many endearing things about him: the humorous incongruities that constantly shadowed him, the intellectual thoughts and the practical concerns, and, most of all, the love and friendship.

After leaving Sunstone's employment, Daniel continued to serve on its board and comment at symposiums. He settled in working for eXeSys, Inc, a computer software company. The increasing tensions between the Church and its intellectuals troubled him because he loved the Church, he loved the intellectuals (many were close friends), and he loved open exploration. But his grace-motivated tolerance did not match

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the intolerant times, and with the excommunications of the "September Six," like many invisible others, Daniel became collateral damage. His involvement in institutional religion lessened, and his spirituality became more relational, finding grace and making joy in family and friendships, and in God's natural creation. It was a healthy spiritual journey for him, and he did not lose his passion in life. Through that last decade, Daniel increased in love. When we talked at the symposium this past August, he was serenely happy, full of love, and very much at peace.

Daniel's funeral, held 9 September 2002, nearly filled the overflow gym of the capacious Cottonwood Stake Center. His father, Hartman Rector Jr., recounted Daniel's storied and wildly baptizing missionary labors, where I suspect Daniel's boldness was at times overbearing, but his love then was no doubt overwhelming, too. Family members remembered his nurturing, and his adventure buddies shared intimacies gained while skiing, biking, and climbing. All remembered the intensity with which he met life—energetic activity coupled with deep and loving and accepting relationships. To have that life unexpectedly end after only forty-six years makes his departure pronounced. At John Kennedy Jr.'s funeral, Edward Kennedy said, "He had every gift but length of years." Similarly, Daniel had a full and complete life; just a short one. It was abundant in passion and joy and brimming with love and friendship; like God's sun, it democratically shined light on everyone. I was a small part of Daniel Rector's life, but my life is larger because of his. So, too, is Sunstone's. ☪

Daniel helped Sunstone in its hour of need. Those who can, please reciprocate his gift by donating to the Daniel Rector Memorial Fund at any Zions Bank. Thank you. —E.P.