

Chapter 15

Brodie and BYU, Nuptials and Newborns, 1945-50

Following his discharge from the army, Hugh went to visit his mother. Sloanie and Hugh's sister, Barbara, were living in a one-room efficiency apartment just down the street from the palatial home in which they had lived five years earlier. Hugh's father was living in a separate apartment. Barbara remembers that Hugh arrived, pulled off his uniform, and slept for three days straight.² Obviously, there was not space to accommodate Hugh in either place, so he soon retreated into the "softly howling wilderness" of Utah's red-rock country, where he could "get as far from the post-war world as circumstances will allow." He camped in an area "last occupied by the Pueblos some time in the 10th Century of Our Era," and bought supplies, received mail, and found the only society that he cared for in the small town of Hurricane, Utah. He confessed to Paul Springer, now married and working for the courts in San Francisco: "Almost as comforting as the long-delayed joys of solitude is the company of the plain and sober people of the area where I live—quite the best I have found yet. And what a contrast to the Armed Forces of the United States of North America!"³

After witnessing the horrors of war, Hugh was likely suffering from what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder.⁴ Immersing himself in wilderness and soli-

²Barbara Nibley Richards, Telephone conversation with Boyd Petersen, 20 February 2002, notes in my possession.

³Hugh Nibley, Letter to Paul Springer, n.d., ca. December 1945.

⁴Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) did not become a recognizable diagnosis until after the Vietnam War. However, the symptoms were identified in earlier wars as "soldier's heart" in the Civil War, as "shell shock" in World War I, and as "combat fatigue" in World War II. According to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, it is "a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious