

Martin Gutke Brixen



Martin Gutke Brixen, the only child of Andrew C. Brixen and Julia M. Gutke Brixen, was born January 4, 1892. Although his birth occurred in New York, he was raised in Salt Lake City in the Waterloo Ward.

He grew up in a two-story house surrounded by wheat and corn fields. Parleys Creek ran just behind the house. He spent much of his early summers riding the neighbor's horse and a bicycle his father had brought him from back East. In fact, this was one of the first two-wheeled bicycles to arrive in Salt Lake.

Young Martin was especially close to his father and was allowed to accompany him on many of his business dealings throughout the valley. Andy brought pictures of animals and comics from back East whenever he came across something he thought would amuse his little son. He even subscribed to the Wall Street Journal so that young Martin could enjoy the comic strips

which had not yet found their way to the Salt Lake papers.

Unfortunately, when Martin was only 8 years old, his father became extremely ill and died very suddenly at the age of only forty one. This, of course, was a terrible shock to Martin and his mother, Julia, but he carried marvelous memories of the time spent with his father throughout the rest of his life.

Martin went down to the BYU for a couple of years, which at the time was only a pre-high school education center. Students were required by law to complete their education only through the eighth grade, and this was what Martin chose to do.

After graduating from the BYU he went to work full time for the Lambert Paper Company, where at the age of only fifteen, he had total charge of the roll paper division.

He continued working here for a few more years and then became engaged to Lucille Walker. He was very much in love and planned to be married in the near future.



One evening after work, Martin's mother handed him a letter she was extremely anxious for him to open and read. He did so, and much to his dismay found the LDS Church had given him a

calling to serve a mission in England. Being very much in love and anxious to get married, he shared none of his mother's enthusiasm about the calling. In fact he told her there was just no way he would even consider it.

Needless to say, his mother was horribly disappointed. She had been extremely active in the Church and was very anxious to see her son fill a mission. Martin knew how much this meant to her, and it bothered him deeply for the next few weeks. He knew it had not been easy for her to be both mother and father for the majority of his life, and he felt somewhat indebted to her.

After discussing the problem at length with Lucille it was decided that he should go to England and serve the mission, and she would wait for him. He explained to his mother that it was only for her sake that he had decided to go. Furthermore, he expected this to satisfy in full any debt he owed her for taking on the responsibility of raising him.

So June 30th, 1909, at the age of 17, Martin sailed away for his two-year sojourn in England.

Martin began his mission in New Castle Conference, a ship-building town. His first companion was Elder Adamson from Taylorsville, Utah who was nearly 65 years old.

After a few months he received a new companion, Elder George Cox, who was a very intelligent young man from Pocatello. Because neither of them had had much experience speaking in public, they devised a plan to develop this talent. Each day they went out into a large public park and spoke aloud to the trees to get used to the sound of their voices. They would choose a subject and then speak as long as they could on that one subject. They also tried to integrate illustrative stories because they knew these would hold people's interest.

After a year in the field, word had gotten around that Martin and his companion had become excellent public speakers. In fact, at their quarterly conference President Rutger Clawson called on Martin to speak extemporaneously.

Martin was then called to establish a branch in Shildon, a small coal-mining town, with cobblestone streets. The townsmen all wore wooden shoes with cleats. Each night at 5:00 they could be seen on their porches sitting in galvanized tubs with their wives scrubbing their backs.

Martin now had a new companion, Elder Merrill, also from Idaho. Their first problem in this town was getting room and board. No one would take them in because rumors had spread around the town they were enticing young women to go to Salt Lake with them and live in polygamy.

After many unsuccessful attempts, they came upon a 40-year old Atheist who owned a butcher shop. He agreed to let them stay. It just so happened that above his shop he had a small hall with benches and an organ. As they began baptizing people, they used this hall to hold their meetings.

Their first missionary experience in Shildon began when a year old, undernourished child came knocking at their door. She said her mother was very sick and had seen an angel who told her to get the Mormon missionaries. The girl brought the missionaries to her mother where they

administered to her, and she did indeed recover. This woman had four full-grown daughters, and they became the nucleus of the Church in Shildon.

Martin and his companion were the first to teach the gospel in Shildon since Brigham Young had been there many years before. Their congregation began very small but gradually grew, mainly with women, until there were approximately 25 members.

By now the persecution had become intensely fierce. One Sunday a mob formed outside the chapel. The congregation left the hall arm in arm, but as they entered the street the mob began ripping their clothes off and slapping them around. An old hag jumped Elder Merrill and tried to choke him, but Martin came to his rescue and pulled the man away. Just then a pathway opened up through the crowd and both elders ran for their very lives. The mob continued the chase, throwing gravel at them as they tried to escape. Eventually the elders left the mob in the distance and fortunately escaped with only cuts and bruises.

At this point they got the help of attorneys and some police protection. The ring leaders of the mob were thrown in the workhouse, and for the next six weeks their chapel was filled to capacity with many curiosity seekers.

As a result of all this there was a large baptism held at the river where 12 to 15 additional people were baptized into the Mormon Church.

Although Martin began his mission with the sole intent of appeasing his mother's wishes, his whole outlook changed drastically after being out in the field only a short time. He wrote Lucille to try and explain this change to her. For some reason he no longer felt he wanted to marry her, and he was sure she would no longer love him. He was so sure of this that he asked Lucille to return the engagement ring he had given her to his mother. Lucille was extremely reluctant to do this and wrote that she wanted to wait until he returned home before they made any final decisions. But Martin was so adamant in his feelings that he asked his mother to go to Lucille and retrieve the ring for him.

Needless to say, he never married Lucille, although he did date her a few times after returning home just to be sure he still felt the same way.

It was fortunate for all his progenitors that he didn't marry Lucille because a few years later it was found she could not bear children. Interestingly enough, the one bargain Martin had made with the Lord in completing a successful mission was that the Lord would give him a family. Had he married Lucille this never would have happened.

Soon after returning home, Martin decided to enter law school at the University of Utah. His mother had agreed to support him through his education and after discussing his plans with President Kingsbury at the U of U, he was admitted.

It was not long after this that the most beautiful girl in Salt Lake caught his eye. He met her at a dance hall called the Odeon. Her name was Josephine Henson, but unfortunately she was already engaged. This, however, did not deter Martin. He merely applied all the salesmanship techniques

he had learned on his mission and this, combined with his own natural charm and good-looks, swept Josephine right off her feet.

Martin's mother was very opposed to their getting married. In fact, she gave her son the option of going to law school with her financial support, or marrying Josephine and forgetting law school. They discussed this, but they were so much in love they decided to go ahead and were married in 1913.

Because Martin had no professional training, he went to work at the railroad. He was not used to this kind of heavy labor and came home each night with raw, blistered hands. Josephine was very anxious that he find other work because of the class of people that he worked with at the railroad.

Therefore, he decided to attend Henneger's Business School to learn shorthand and accounting. Upon completion of these courses he got a job in the accounting department at the railroad. Unfortunately, he didn't enjoy this work either.

At this point he decided to use some of the training his missionary experience had given him, and he took a sales position with Beneficial Life Insurance. This was the first of many sales positions throughout the rest of his life. In the early years he sold everything from vacuum cleaners to coffee and jams to sewing machines.

Martin still had the diamond he had once given to Lucille, but he felt that real estate would be a more profitable investment than the diamond, so he traded it for a lot on 1390 South 1500 East. He was then able to procure a loan for \$2,000 and with this built a house on the lot. It was in this house that Julia, their first child, was born.

Times got extremely tough for them, and they could no longer afford to live in the house, so in 1918 they decided to rent it out.

Josephine took Julia with her to California where they stayed with some of her sisters. Martin took a hotel room in Salt Lake, and joined his Uncle George in the oil business.

Uncle George had a knack for making fortunes, but unfortunately he was equally adept at losing them. He had been involved as a prospector in Alaska during the gold rush, and he used some of this money to purchase land in north Salt Lake which he believed to be rich in oil. He persuaded Martin to sell stock for him in this project so they could drill a well and market the oil. Unfortunately, they later found that what they had originally hoped was oil was merely some kind of worthless gas.

At this point, Martin joined his family in California, and took a position with Prudential Life Insurance. In six months he had done so well, he paid cash for a Model T, and the family returned to Salt Lake.

They decided to sell their house and move in with Josephine's mother for a few months and then live with Martin's mother. It was here that Josephine learned the art of cooking and entertaining.

Their house was sold for \$2500 down to a man named Fisher, who left town before making any monthly payments. Therefore Martin sold the house again for \$5500 to another party, and thereby made a double profit.

It was while they were staying with Martin's mother on 2nd Avenue and A Street that their second daughter, LeJeune, was born in 1920.

Soon after they moved to a house on Mead Court for about a year, and then they returned to a duplex in the avenues. They first lived on the west side of 309 4th Avenue and later moved to the east side.

It was while they were living here that Martin was approached by a very good friend, Melvin Ballard, to join him as a Circulation Manager at the Deseret News. Melvin, whose father was an apostle, was the Circulation Supervisor, and he wanted Martin to supervise a route of delivery boys. Martin did this very successfully and eventually went on to become the supervisor for the entire state.



Melvin had married into a very wealthy family, the Coveys, who offered to set him up in an automobile dealership they had just bought on 7th South and State. Melvin had seen Martin's success as a manager at the Deseret News, so he asked him if he would come and be the [Sales Manager](#) with him in this new venture. Martin consented and set up a highly successful team of 24 salesmen.

As an example of how well they did, one month they sold more than any other agency west of the Mississippi. As their success multiplied, they bought out another agency

which expanded their operation into four states.

Shortly after joining Covey-Ballard, Martin, their last child, was born in 1927, while they were living at 861 Kensington Avenue.

Martin continued to do very well with Covey-Ballard, but after a period of twelve years, the pressure had become so intense that he felt if he continued much longer he would have a nervous breakdown.

At this point his partner, Ballard, wanted him to buy into the partnership for \$10,000. Martin refused because of his poor health, but signed a contract to stay with them for one year longer as their Sales Manager.

After leaving Covey-Ballard, Martin sold used cars for about two years and then got into the real estate business.



He was approached by Halloran of Halloran & Judge Realty to join them and sell "pinko's". These were houses that had been repossessed as a result of the depression, and then put in the "pink of condition" for resale. They were financed by Liberty bonds which the government provided and allowed the purchaser a 4.5% interest rate. Martin was quick to make a name for himself selling these pinko's and won a three-state contest, the prize being a three week vacation in California.

Another advantage that selling real estate brought him was knowing immediately when a hot deal was available. He took advantage of

this numerous times, buying run down homes from desperate owners, repairing them, and then reselling them for a profit.

It was at this time that he bought the lot on 860 South Main for \$10,000. He then turned around and leased it for \$150 per month -- obviously an outstanding investment.

After being with Halloran and Judge for about 4 years, Martin negotiated a very large sale involving the property on 3rd South and Main where Walker's Store had been. He sold this land to Sears and made so much money on the deal that his company decided to reduce his share of the commission. This of course, made him extremely upset and he left the company along with another man, Wally Smith.

Martin and Wally decided to open up their own office and take out their broker's licenses. Upon doing so, a very wealthy man named MacIntyre asked them to manage his properties around town. In return he would put them up in a nice office. They did this for a few years and did very well, but once again the pressure became very intense. Therefore, Martin decided to leave Wally and join E. B. Wicks Realty on First South and





State. He stayed here for about three or four years and then joined forces with Manford Shaw who was just opening up his own office, and had also worked with Wicks.

Martin stayed with Manford Shaw for about five more years and then retired at 65 after completing a very successful sales career. Fortunately, Martin was able to retire in excellent health. He spent the last twenty years enjoying a superb game of golf, a great deal of duck, pheasant and rabbit hunting, fishing, dancing, and managing several properties he owned throughout Salt Lake.

His wife, Josephine, died December 23, 1967, after suffering many painful years with rheumatoid arthritis. In fact, in the mid 1940's Martin decided to take Josephine to Phoenix for a year to see if the drier climate might ease her pain a little. Unfortunately, she did not seem to notice

much difference, so they returned to Salt Lake at the end of the year.

All three of their children married and raised families of their own. Julia and LeJeune both married successful lawyers, and Martin became a prominent architect.

Martin and Josephine raised a wonderful family, and have had all the ingredients of a good, satisfying life.

