

McMasters' Talents Make Friends

By Gordon B. Hinckley

ALMOST ANY DAY at noon one might see a man standing nervously at the Federal Building corner in Salt Lake City. Soon his wife drives up, he jumps in the car, reaches for a sandwich, and they hurry off to a funeral. They have been doing this for nearly twenty years, singing together the melodies that have brought comfort and cheer to thousands who have mourned.

In a single day last week Stuart and Clara McMaster had requests to sing at five funerals. It has not been uncommon for them to participate in two or three missionary farewells, a sacrament meeting, a social gathering, and as many as six funerals, all within the seven days of one week. In the score of years since their marriage they have sung together more than five thousand times. That is an average of almost once a day.

During all of that period they have never performed for money, except to fill a short engagement for a friend in order that he might undergo an operation. They have turned down numerous offers to sing professionally, the better to contribute the talent with which the Lord has blessed them.

AS REGIONAL COUNSEL for the Bureau of Reclamation, Stuart McMaster knows that his first obligation is to the government, and he has not allowed his music to interfere with his work. He has met the demands of both by doing what few would do; he takes his annual leave two or three hours at a time to accommodate the many requests for singing.

Scarcely along with all of these public appearances, this gifted husband and wife have reared four talented children who would be a credit to any father and mother. Nor have they neglected Church responsibility. Stuart served as bishop at a ward of more than two thousand members and is now a member of the Hillside Stake presidency, while Clara has filled most of the offices open to a woman in the Church. One wonders how they found time to do it all.

The answer lies in their philosophy of service. "It's been our privilege" is the way they put it. Out of the gladness they have brought to others, has come a full measure for themselves.

She always plays their own accompaniment. He never sings without her, although she and their daughter occasionally sing together. And the three younger boys are bashfully responding along the same line.

THOSE WHO WITNESSED the Aaronic Priesthood pageant in the Salt Lake Tabernacle will remember the McMasters as the father and mother who with touching melody welcomed a child from his heavenly home. Therein lies their great talent, to impart sentiment without sentimentality, to warm the emotions without being mawkish. They have a repertoire of about a hundred songs—sacred numbers, light opera, and love songs.

There is nothing of the prima donna, none of the trappings of



PRES. AND MRS. J. STUART McMASTER

Have sung together over 5000 times for funerals, programs

of the concert stage about their music. It is more of the heart and the soul, simple, honest, even sweet. They figure that they have by request sung "In the Garden" more than three thousand times. "If I Know You" has been another favorite, as have some of the great hymns of the Restoration.

SALT LAKE City's cafe and theater crowd will remember Stuart as one of the "Harmony Night-hawks" of local fame. He was the handsome boy who picked the banjo, exercised on the trombone, and sang the popular songs of the prosperous twenties. That was to earn money to put him through school.

Most weekday evenings were spent on the Playhouse stage or in the Newhouse dinner room. Nights were spent reading the dull language of torts and equity, and days were occupied with the University of Utah law school. Somehow, along with that grinding schedule he found the hours to have a serious good time with

the apple-of-his-high-school-eye, Clara Watkins. When she finished school at the USAC, and while he had yet a year to go, they married.

IN THE BOOM-AND-BUST year of '23 most of the "Night-hawks" went East, but Stuart concluded that Salt Lake City was the place to live. With the breakup of the old gang, he and his wife began to sing together. They have been at it ever since. No one can gauge the immensity of their contribution, gladly and freely given. With a matched harmony that is peculiarly theirs, they have comforted the sorrowing, touched the hearts of scores of missionaries leaving for fields of labor, brought life to countless parites, enriched many a wedding and added to the spirit of worship in meetings without number.

If it be true that he lives most who serves best, then certainly this couple already have reaped a fuller measure than most folk ever know.