

Folk Humor of the Mormon Country as told by Hector Lee

**The J. Golden Kimball Stories
and the Brother Petersen Yarns**

CD-25

J. Golden Kimball was a man who became a legend in his own time. Born in 1853, he was a working cowboy before becoming an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (commonly known as the Mormon Church) and one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventies, a position in the church hierarchy just below that of the Twelve Apostles. Despite his high position in the church, J. Golden found it impossible to leave the colorful language of his early years behind him. As the stories on this recording show, his sermons were liberally sprinkled with epigrammatic wisdom and punctuated with emphatic profanity. Once, when asked if his swearing during his sermons was intentional, he explained, "No, it's not. I never intend to cuss, but every time I get up to speak, those words just come out. They're left over from my cowboy days, and I can assure you they come from a far larger vocabulary!"

(continued)



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While church authorities may have frowned upon the lanky ex-cowboy for his frequent lapses into profanity, the people loved him. Austin and Alta Fife, with whom Hector Lee collected some of the stories heard here, describe J. Golden as “the most beloved Mormon preacher of the first four decades of our century.” A friend once said to him, “Brother Golden, you are a very generous man. I suppose you love just about everybody.” “Well, yes, I do,” said J. Golden, “but I love some a damn sight more than others.”

Today, throughout the Mormon country, people enjoy telling the stories that have now become a part of the whole cycle of tales about Brother Golden. The stories included on this recording were contributed to Hector Lee by many informants, including Mr. Ranch Kimball (J. Golden’s nephew), attorney Jesse Budge, and attorney Shirley P. Jones.

The Brother Petersen Yarns that make up the second series of stories on this recording were also collected from many individuals. Dr. Lee’s major informants, however, were Bishop P. C. Petersen of Ephraim and Anthony C. Lund of Salt Lake City. These stories are extremely popular among the many Scandinavian converts who made their way to the Mormon country of Utah and Idaho and whose efforts contributed so much to the realization of the Mormon dream of creating a successful agricultural and industrial community in the midst of a former wasteland.

About the Narrator:

The late Hector Lee was a remarkable mixture of scholar, folklorist, historian, and natural storyteller. Born in Decatur, Texas, in 1908, he became Dean of Instruction at Sonoma State College in California. In 1957 he received the Annual Award of the American Association for State and Local History for his outstanding service to American history through television.



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