

President Monson's Life Celebrated with Night of Song, Music, Tributes

By Gerry Avant

Church News editor

In a grand celebration and in honor of President Thomas S. Monson's 85th birthday, some 20,000 people filled the Conference Center on August 17, 2012, for a night of music, narration, and tributes in a program titled "Golden Days: A Celebration of Life."

The selections included music and messages of some of President Monson's favorite Broadway shows and other inspirational songs in celebration of his 85th birthday, which occurred on August 21.

President Monson sat on the first row in the audience with his wife, Frances Johnson Monson, and members of their family.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, told of witnessing a tribute to President Monson on "a country road in the deserts of Arizona" where President Monson stopped to shake hands with a couple and their small children, but ended up patiently greeting many more who appeared.

President Eyring said he has witnessed President Monson "going for the Lord to people,"

usually including children, in settings across the world. "Not only were those he greeted given a golden moment, but so were those of us who saw it happen," he said. "I am not the same, nor is any of the participants, because having felt that love, we are changed."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, also congratulated President Monson "on a life full of golden days. . . . President Monson, you are a friend who brings light to the dark, and you are the prophet of God for our time. We love and sustain you. We pray for you," he said.

"Golden Days: A Celebration of Life" took a nostalgic look back at President Monson's life—his childhood, marriage, military service, and Church service—through music and song.

Many other Church, religious, and civic leaders, as well as longtime friends, paid tribute to President Monson via prerecorded video greetings. He was also recognized for his years of Scouting involvement.

In the program's concluding moments President Monson echoed the words of the Scottish writer and poet James Barrie, who wrote, "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives" (See Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (1977), 335).

"Tonight I have received an entire bouquet of memories," President Monson said.

Almost as a crowning touch, the Conference Center's stage was adorned by hundreds of yellow roses, symbolic of the "golden" days of his life. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBRA GEHRIS