They couldn’t hold another quorum meeting without Bill. So, with cooperation from Bill’s mother, Brother L. Tom Perry and the young men he led entered Bill’s bedroom one Sunday morning.

“We started the meeting with a spirited opening hymn,” said Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Bill came up out of those sheets like he had been shot out of a gun.” By meeting’s end, however, Bill knew he was valued and appreciated.¹

A Friend to All

Everywhere he went, Elder Perry was known for his boundless energy, his spirituality, his optimism, and his ability to make everybody feel at ease. He made friends easily with people from every walk of life. “He was as much at home with a rancher or a farmer as he was with a business executive,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.²

Recently, Elder Perry worked with Catholic Church leaders to discuss religious freedom and other matters. He became close with many of the cardinals. “He connected with them in a very personable, wonderful way,” said Lee Perry, Elder Perry’s son. “They just love him.”³

Elder Perry had a lifelong gift for making friends. When he worked in New York, USA, as a retail executive, he thought his fellow commuters seemed unfriendly. So he decided to shake things up.

One man always stood on the same platform location to wait for the train. He also picked the same seat on the train every day.

To build a friendship, Elder Perry showed up early several days in a row to grab those spots before the man could. At first the man was irritated, but before long, the two were laughing and it turned into a game—a game the whole train station eventually enjoyed as more and more commuters joined in. In time...
they all grew so close that they sang Christmas carols together at the station. “It livened up the whole platform,” Elder Perry remembered.

A Family Man

Family was extremely important to Elder Perry. He met his first wife, Virginia Lee, as he was counting attendance for a stake leadership meeting in college. He said later that he did all right in taking the young men’s attendance, but when it was time to tally the young women, his math skills hit a roadblock. “Suddenly my eyes met a charming, beautiful young woman. I completely lost my ability to count.”


His whole life, Elder Perry made time for birthdays, family vacations, family traditions, and other important occasions.

A Servant of God

For over 40 years as an Apostle, Elder Perry’s booming voice—and his daily conduct—bore fervent testimony of the Savior and His restored gospel. “He knew the Savior, he loved the Savior,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook.

That powerful testimony strengthened the lives of those who heard it. “The gospel of Jesus Christ is true,” Elder Perry said in one general conference. “It has been restored to bless our lives in these latter days. It contains all the truths, principles, and ordinances contained in our Father in Heaven’s great plan of happiness, which is a plan for us to return and live with Him in the eternal realms beyond. That the gospel of Jesus Christ is His divine way for us to face our glorious future is my testimony to you.”

NOTES
3. Interview with Lee Perry, May 5, 2015.