For BYU, 1960 was a watershed year: *BYU Studies* began its first full year of publication. KBYU–FM aired its first broadcast. The Ballroom Dance Company was formed. Three BYU students formed the Lettermen and recorded their first song. The honors program was established. The MBA program was approved. Rex Lee, future BYU president, was student body president. Enrollment topped ten thousand for the second year in a row (up from forty-five hundred in 1950). In the midst of construction in Provo that would more than double the value of its physical facilities, BYU also purchased 135 acres in Anaheim, California; 313 acres in Portland, Oregon; and 249 acres in Phoenix, Arizona, as sites for satellite campuses in an ambitious expansion program. And a statistics department was organized at BYU.

Keenly aware of the rapidly increasing enrollment at BYU, and with even greater increases looming as baby boomers reached university age in the 1960s and 1970s, BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson formed the Bureau of Church Studies at BYU in the mid-1950s to predict overall Church membership and, more specifically, university-aged Church membership through the year 2000. To spearhead the study, he hired an academic from the Stanford Research Institute, Howard Nielson, whose work had caught his attention: Nielson had created for the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company a sophisticated projection entitled *America’s Demand for Wood*.

Nielson completed the Church growth study in 1957, and the results provided Wilkinson with the forecasts he needed to facilitate long-term planning for the Church Educational System. When he discovered Nielson was LDS, Wilkinson urged him to stay at BYU teaching statistics as part of the Economics Department. Nielson decided to stay for a year, ultimately teaching statistics classes in four different departments: economics, agricultural economics, accounting, and mathematics. After Nielson’s first year at BYU, he was offered a job by IBM at three times his BYU salary, based on the continued esteem of the *America’s Demand for Wood* study. He talked to Dean Weldon Taylor about the decision he was facing. In the course of the conversation, Nielson mentioned that teaching statistics at BYU would be a lot easier if one department, a statistics department, did all the teaching. Taylor, apparently fearing that Nielson would take the IBM job, said he would form the department. Nielson agreed to stay; he wanted to raise his growing family in the friendly atmosphere of Provo.

Fifty years after the Statistics Department slipped into existence, the department is strong and well poised for the future. All of the faculty now have PhDs in statistics or biostatistics, but in addition to developing statistical methodology, the faculty carry out research on a wide variety of applied problems, including air pollution monitoring, television ratings, improvement of sports teams, rating of sports teams, DNA analysis, health-care systems, evolutionary ecology, chemical thermodynamics, educational methods, industrial improvement, wildlife management, authorship styles in literature, paleontology, election prediction, and weapons systems reliability—just to name a few. The diversity has enriched each member of the department and led to beneficial cross-fertilization and collaboration. BYU is positioned advantageously to prepare LDS statisticians for these important future careers.

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