

# LDS apostle voices 'regret' for massacre

Some at the Mountain Meadows memorial service say they wanted to hear Eyring use the word 'sorry'

BY JESSICA RAVITZ  
The Salt Lake Tribune

**MOUNTAIN MEADOWS** — A Mormon apostle, speaking Tuesday at the 150th anniversary memorial service for victims of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, apologized for the church's role, expressing "profound regret for the massacre."

In a statement considered groundbreaking, Elder Henry B. Eyring, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said new research shows local Mormon leaders were responsible for recruiting Paiute Indians to participate in the crime during which 120 men, women and children of the Fancher-Baker wagon train, en route to California from Arkansas, were brutally killed by a group of Mormon militia members and some Paiute allies, although the Paiutes' participation remains disputed.

"What was done here long ago by members of our church represents a terrible and inexcusable departure from Christian teaching and conduct," said Eyring, who choked up while reading a statement delivered on behalf of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "We cannot change what happened, but we can remember and honor those who were killed here."

The words, "we're sorry," were not part of the statement, but Richard Turley Jr., the LDS Church's managing director of family and church history and co-author of the forthcoming book, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, insisted after the ceremony that the statement was meant to be an apology.

"[The church] is deeply, deeply sorry," he said. "What happened here was horrific."

The apology went out to descendants of victims, but also to those of survivors and perpetrators.

"Many of those who carried out the massacre were haunted all their lives by what they did and saw on that unforgettable day. They and their relatives have also suffered under a heavy burden of guilt," Eyring said. "No doubt divine justice will impose appropriate punishment."

The service, attended by about 400 people, began as an antique wagon, driven by Arkansas descendants and pulled by two Belgian work horses, wound its way down to the memorial grave site. Behind the wagon were descendants carrying flags bearing the names of the 29 families who were massacred in this valley

► To read the First Presidency's statement and other stories about the Mountain Meadows Massacre, visit [www.sltrib.com/lds](http://www.sltrib.com/lds).

that was a popular stop along the Old Spanish Trail.

Hanging from the fence surrounding the memorial about an hour's drive southwest of Cedar City were 120 crosses representing those who died in the massacre, plus another 17 adorned with red ribbons to represent the children who survived.

Onlookers watched the procession, snapping pictures and filming with hand-held recorders. Some wiped away tears, while several others sobbed openly and embraced. They wept for people they'd never known but whose memories they and their families have held onto for decades.

The bloodbath in this meadow has stood out as perhaps Utah's, and the LDS Church's, darkest and most disputed chapter. Descendants, in varying degrees, have cried out for apologies, recognition and protection of their ancestors' stories. So while the people in the audience heard Eyring's words and viewed them as progress, few seemed to hear an outright apology.

Historian Will Bagley, who wrote *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, appreciated the expression of contrition to the Paiutes, but he felt the church — as an institution — fell short in owning up to its culpability.

"I don't think shoving it off on local [Mormon] leadership is an apology," he said. "Did you hear an 'I'm sorry'?"

Added Priscilla Dickson, 60, of St. George, a descendant of the Tackett family, which was among the emigrants, "Simply saying 'I'm sorry,' would go a long way."

Patty Norris of the Arkansas-based Mountain Meadows Massacre Descendants organization referred to the statement as an "almost apology."

"I don't think they came right out and apologized, but I did feel like it was an apology," said Norris, whose organization represents descendants of child survivors of the massacre. "It's closer than anything we've ever had, and I appreciated at least the effort."

The scars of that time have been long-lasting for the Paiutes, said Lora Tom, a representative of the Paiute



PHOTOS BY STEVE GRIFFIN/The Salt Lake Tribune

Descendants of the victims of the Mountain Meadows Massacre follow a wagon train down the road to the grave site during a memorial service on Tuesday. Below, Lora Tom, center, of the Paiute Tribe, is applauded after her speech. "For 150 years no one asked for our account," she said.

Nation.

"For 150 years no one asked for our account," she said.

Tom, whose remarks elicited a standing ovation, said long-perpetuated lies faulting her ancestors have hurt Paiute youth who've grown up reading about this in history books. She said her ancestors had remained silent because they were trying to survive. They feared speaking up because they relied on local Mormons.

"That was a time not to confront this story, but now is the time," she said. The Paiutes "have kept to themselves for too long... This is the beginning for us. Let us begin together."

Eyring's statement offered a "separate expression of regret" to the Paiutes, "who have unjustly borne for too long the principal blame for what occurred during the massacre."

While the extent of the Paiutes' involvement is disputed, Eyring said church leaders now believe they "would not have participated without the direction and stimulus provided by local church leaders and members."

New research, to be included in Turley's book, which will be released in coming months, "enabled us to know more than we ever have known about this unspeakable episode. The truth, as we have come to know it, saddens us deeply," he said.

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## Groups to join for landmark designation

**MOUNTAIN MEADOWS** — In a conciliatory move, the leader of one of three Mountain Meadows Massacre descendant organizations used Tuesday's 150th anniversary memorial service to announce her group will join one of the other groups in pushing for historic-landmark designation for the massacre memorial site.

The designation that Patty Norris of Mountain Meadows Massacre Descendants will seek in conjunction with the Mountain Meadows Monument Foundation Inc. would offer protection of the site to interested parties without forcing the LDS Church to give up ownership of the site, she said.

It would give many descendants comfort and bolster their faith as plans for another monument, expected to eventually be built in the northern valley where the massacre

occurred, start to develop.

Richard Turley Jr., the LDS Church's managing director of family and church history, said the idea may not be too far-fetched. He said the church "came here today to express regret and listen."

So as talks about landmark designation continue, "We support going forward and considering it," he said.

The future of the monument site long has been the subject of debate between the three descendant groups.

The third group — the Mountain Meadows Association — has said it doesn't support any change to management of the memorial. It works with the LDS Church to maintain the sites and is pleased with the arrangement.

— Jessica Ravitz

## Lost boy found safe in the Uintas

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Miller to notice.

"I seen a flash a light," said Miller, a member of Summit County's volunteer search and rescue team.

At first Miller thought that flash was one of many deer tails he had seen during more than five hours of flying. But when pilot Steve Rugg turned back, Miller knew it was the boy.

"He was hiding from us," Miller said.

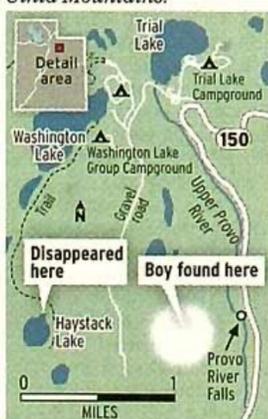
Benjie lay a seventh of a mile from where he had wandered off while playing near a campsite at Lake Haystack, about 24 miles east of Kamas and off State Road 150. He was missing a shoe and sock and had scratches on his face and feet but otherwise was OK.

That came as quite a relief to his mother, Naomi Myrup.

"I just want to thank everyone who came out and looked," a tearful Myrup said as she held Benjie minutes after their

## Toddler rescued

A Salt Lake City 3-year-old boy was missing for eight hours on Tuesday in the Uinta Mountains.



STEVE BAKER/The Salt Lake Tribune

reunion. "They found my baby."

Myrup and a friend took their young children and a friend's child camping Monday afternoon at the lake.

The next day, the women were preparing breakfast while Benjie and four other children, ages 2 to 5, played in the woods. The children later told the women they had been "hunting for bears," Summit County sheriff's Detective

Dean Carr said.

Around 8:45 a.m., the children reported that Benjie had wandered off, Myrup said. After a quick, frantic search, Myrup rounded up the other children and went to a restaurant down the road to call police while her friend, who is 8 months pregnant, continued to look for Benjie, the mother said.

Within an hour, search and rescue teams from surrounding counties arrived. A Wasatch County Sheriff's Office plane took to the skies with the DPS helicopter.

Volunteers — including an Arizona couple on their honeymoon — gathered to help in the search.

"It's just too close to home," said John Tate, who was visiting from Mt. Vernon, Wash., with his wife. The Tates have two twin grandchildren age 3 and another grandchild, 4.

The Bardsley Foundation, a Utah charity which helps find missing people, organized volunteers on foot, horses and ATVs. The foundation was set up after the unsuccessful search for 12-year-old Boy Scout Garrett Bardsley, who disappeared from nearby Cuberant Lake in August 2004.

Summit County Sheriff Dave Edmunds said he threw



LEAH HOGSTEN/The Salt Lake Tribune

Naomi Myrup, mother of 3-year-old Benjamin Myrup, gets a celebratory hug from Kevin Bardsley, father of 12-year-old Garrett Bardsley, who disappeared from Cuberant Lake in August 2004 and was never found.

every resource at his disposal to the search and hoped for the best. But he warned that recent bear activity and overnight temperatures in the low 30s did not bode well for a little boy, even one with two layers of clothes and hiking boots.

Around 4:30 p.m., Naomi Myrup told her husband, Mathew, she was getting increasingly worried about nightfall coming. Five minutes

later, she said, word came over the radio that Benjie had been spotted.

Benjie's uncle accompanied a ground crew to retrieve the boy and take him to Upper Provo River Falls, where he reunited with his mother.

As Benjie clutched a white teddy bear, Naomi Myrup asked her son if he knew he had gotten lost.

"Uh-huh," Benjie replied

shyly before waving to news cameras.

Myrup offered a bit of humor after a terrifying day, saying, "We had six kids. We only lost one."

She said she would not shy away from taking her young children camping again. Only next time, she said, she will keep a closer eye on Benjie.

And, "He'll have a whistle." [rrizzo@sltrib.com](mailto:rrizzo@sltrib.com)