

ROBERT PAXTON

Joseph Smith, John Solomon Fullmer, and Jean Valjean are among his regular companions, members of the circle of people who have influenced and inspired him. Robert Charles Paxton, Jr. was born, June 23, 1966. As the second of twelve children in a military family, Robert has lived in Utah, Nevada, California, Texas, Virginia, Arizona, and Germany. He has lived in dozens of residences in his forty years, though he has lived in the same home now for over eleven years.

Robert wrote his first play at the age of ten—an adaptation of *Rumpelstiltskin*. In junior high school he wrote another play, which earned honorable mention in a magazine contest. A class scheduling mistake sent him to a drama class instead of Spanish and he decided to stay for the term. He caught the acting bug and has appeared in numerous plays as well as small film, television, and commercial projects.

He tried his fortunes with football, soccer and basketball, but his only competitive edge was that he was able to run continually. While he still plays sports whenever he can, he has accepted the fact that his gifts are generally more verbal than physical.

After graduating from high school in Killeen, Texas, Robert attended BYU for a year, and then served a mission to France and Belgium. He returned and finished school, graduating *Magna Cum Laude* from BYU, where he studied English, creative writing, and theatre. He also met and married Tryn Peterson in 1989.

In the summer of 1990, Robert presented a paper on William Wordsworth at the annual Wordsworth conference in Grasmere, England and was able to attend theatre in the West End, where he saw the musical *Les Miserables* for the first time. He considers Hugo's book one of the masterpieces of world literature, and concurs with the assessment that it is the truest book outside the scriptural canon.

It was for a BYU Church History class that Robert wrote his first biographical sketch, on the life of his ancestor John Solomon Fullmer. He was fascinated with the life of the man as well as with the process of writing about real lives.

After he and Tryn both earned Masters degrees in writing from BYU, Robert entered the three-year MFA playwriting program at UNLV, where he wrote numerous plays, including adaptations of scriptural and historical stories. He wrote and performed a one-man play on the life of Joseph Smith, and wrote another play about Joseph and Emma in Nauvoo, which was presented at the Utah Shakespearean Festival New Play Series.

During his Vegas years, Robert was commissioned to write the outdoor musical drama *UTAH!*, based on the life of Jacob Hamblin and the settlement of Southern Utah. It premiered at Tuacahn on his birthday in 1995, and subsequently played to over 200,000 people. 1995 also saw the premier of the film he co-authored called "Second Chance."

A varied career has provided Robert with insight into the challenges we all face in this mortal life, along with much material for future writing projects. His experience includes catering and construction; teaching English and writing to troubled teens as well as university students; writing, producing, and directing numerous plays; creating and administering arts programs and festivals; selling advertising, publishing, and distributing; and selling insurance and financial planning products. Robert now happily writes full time, calling upon all his previous experience to build a successful writing business. Through his company, Write My History, he writes life histories for people who don't know where to begin themselves, or are too busy to get around to it.



The most important story he is writing is his own life. He struggles each day to get the story right for the sake of his own character development, his wife and four children, and for his love of liberty and Zion. He accepts the lesson from poet Leslie Norris that being a poet is more the way you live than the way you write. Robert Paxton finds great satisfaction in discovering and sharing true stories, and regularly adding new heroes to his personal pantheon.