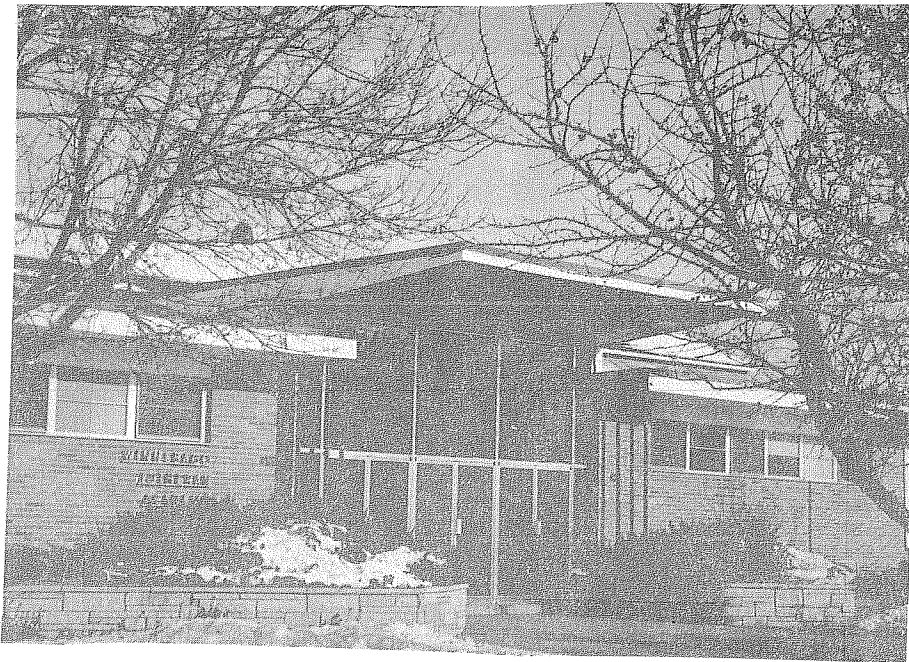


Winnebago Lutheran Academy 1925-2000

75 Years of God's Grace



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Permit me to begin by doing a little name-dropping. What do names like E.C. Fredrich, Erwin Scharf, Wilbert Gawrisch, H.J. Vogel, Martin Albrecht have in common? If you answered that these men were all influential in the worker training at schools like Northwestern College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, you'd be correct. What about the names C.J. Lawrenz, Edmund Reim, Martin Janke, Karl Gurgel Sr. or G.E. Bergemann? If you answered that these men were prominent in our synod's history, you'd be correct. What about John Schibbelhut, T.W. Zuberbier, David Lauber, Raymond Spangenberg or Paul Knueppel? If you answered that these men were recognized by their peers as being some of the most respected in their field of expertise you'd be correct. But these men all have one other thing in common--they all have been associated with Winnebago Lutheran Academy at some point in its 75 year history. They have been the teachers in the classroom, the administrators, the area pastors, and chairmen of the WLA Executive Board. These are the men who have helped make WLA what it is today. But, of course, there's much more to the story. Because Winnebago Lutheran could not have succeeded without the support of God-fearing laymen and Christian parents, whose names will most likely not appear in my paper, much less in a history of the Wisconsin Synod. They, too, are at the heart of the tremendous blessings God has given to WLA. It took a combination of the hard work of all these people under the mercy and guidance of our God to bring us the year 2000 and a joyful celebration of Winnebago's 75th anniversary. This modest history will try to cover the struggles and the triumphs, of those men and

women who have labored to bring up teenagers in the "training and instruction of the Lord." It is a history written by a young man who humbly tries on behalf the countless other graduates to express appreciation to God for the blessings He's imparted to all of us through WLA, and sincerely prays for the Academy's continued success in the future.

I. THE BERGEMANN YEARS (1925-1945)

According to sainted Pastor G.E. Bergemann of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Fond du Lac, the idea for Winnebago Lutheran Academy actually was planted by a young girl at her graduation from the 8th grade of St. Peter's Lutheran elementary school. The story goes that this young graduate, Viola Zimmerman (class of 1929), interrupted her prepared address to the assembly to plead "Please give us another year of Christian education at this school!" Her plea was heard. Under the guidance of Pastors Bergemann and his associate H.K. Moussa, the congregation decided to provide a 9th grade school year for its students. St. Peter's provided a classroom in their new school building, erected in 1925. The building was equipped with 8 classrooms, an auditorium and modern facilities. Mr. C.J. Hinn, a coal dealer and a member of St. Peter's, generously consented to pay for the seating in the new classroom. Hinn, along with Herman Michler and other dedicated members would provide much of the financial support needed in those first years. The congregation also provided 2 teachers, Mr. E. Jacobs as the instructor and Pastor Moussa himself,

who taught Latin. A \$27.00 tuition fee was set and would remain at that level for several years. During the 1925-1926 school year, St. Peter's 9th grade had 22 students, in addition to the 340 enrolled in St. Peter's elementary grades.

But soon the year came to a close and a decision loomed large in the near future for St. Peter's congregation. How and where do we continue to nurture the hearts of these students? Is it feasible for us to continue their Christian education?

On June 6, 1926, a decision was made. At a meeting attended by 388 people, interested participants voted after spirited discussion to organize a Lutheran high school association. Since 1903, Milwaukee Lutheran High School had functioned as joint venture between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. But seeing as there was no Missouri Synod presence in Fond du Lac, this new high school would be the first Area Lutheran High School to be affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod alone. Previous to June, 1926 meeting, Pastors Bergemann and Moussa, together with Pastors Pifer (St. Paul, Eldorado), and Koeninger (North Fond du Lac), had presented a proposal to the pastors of the Winnebago Mixed Conference that the area congregations unite and provide a high school education for all the interested teenagers of the area congregations. Based on the proposal, the gathering adopted a constitution expressing the aims and policies regarding a continued high school education at the Fond du Lac school. The Winnebago Lutheran Academy Association was born, except it did not consist of congregations, but rather individual members providing the financial

means of support for WLA. The Association's constitution states that it "shall consist of communicant members of the Synodical Conference, each paying \$5.00 or more per year."¹ These individual contributors would form a branch at their congregations, and each branch would provide delegates to the Academy Board.

At this point, let's take a few steps off the beaten path and look in greater detail at the lives of two very influential men in the Academy's early history:

Reverend Hans Kollar Moussa (1883-1928)

He was a man who possessed "singular gifts of heart and mind, and for their application to the highest ends there was added the further grace of humility and balance."² Reverend Hans Kollar Moussa was the visionary pastor of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran, Fond du Lac, and the point man for the group that founded Winnebago Lutheran Academy.

Born into a pastor's family on June 18, 1883, Hans Kollar Moussa spent his childhood years in the town of Genoa, Michigan. He was ordained into the pastoral ministry himself in 1904. During the course of his ministry, he served congregations in Winona, Minnesota, as well as Burlington and Jefferson, Wisconsin before accepting the call to St. Peter's where he served as associate pastor with Reverend G.E. Bergemann. Bergemann was the Wisconsin Synod president from 1909-1933, and deserves much of the credit for leading

¹ Winnebago Lutheran Academy Association constitution dated June 6, 1926, WLA Faculty Minutes 1926-1935.

² Obituary, Hans Kollar Moussa, The Northwestern Lutheran, Volume 15, Number 10, (May, 13, 1928), pp.145-146

Winnebago during the early years. But Moussa had already planted the seed of higher Christian education in Fond du Lac years before.

Regarded as one of the pioneers of the Wisconsin Synod's periodical, *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Moussa used that medium to promote the virtues of Christian secondary education to the synod's members on a regular basis. Together with Reverend Bergemann, these two influential men were instrumental in the birth of this somewhat unheard of (and in the beginning, somewhat unpopular) idea of Christ-centered secondary education for future laymen, as well as future called workers.

Moussa was also the secretary of the educational survey committee appointed by the 1925 Synod Convention. In the wake of World War I, the synod faced a serious problem with overcrowding at our synodical worker-training schools, chiefly because of a growing preparatory school enrollment. The "Moussa Report" delivered at the 1927 Convention offered five recommendations, of which the most noteworthy is this: *"The synod should authorize and subsidize the establishment of preparatory schools, or academies, in many different parts of its territory, preferably according to districts."*³ Already in 1927, Moussa not only proposed the plan for the separation of the synod's college and preparatory schools (a plan that was, of course, eventually implemented), but also saw a shadow of the Area Lutheran High School system as it stands today. The main difference, of course, was that Moussa and his

³ Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1927, pp.41-47

committee had envisioned that the purpose of the area high schools would be the secondary education of future called workers, and that producing qualified laymen would merely be a byproduct of these schools. Hence Winnebago Lutheran came to be called an "academy" rather than a "high school." The floor committee at that 1927 convention offered four points in response. One proposed that the Dakota-Montana academy be subsidized and controlled by the synod. Another proposed to subsidize the Fond du Lac academy with \$1200 annually. The proposal regarding the Dakota-Montana academy was adopted. This school became known as Northwestern Lutheran Academy of Mobridge, South Dakota. The Fond du Lac proposal was repeatedly tabled. Did the synod not "buy into" the Fond du Lac school as a legitimate source of called workers? Was the synod so financially strapped in the pre-Depression years that money to an untested and unproven institution proved to be too great of a risk? Whatever the answer may be, if the Fond du Lac school were to forge ahead, they would do so without financial support from the synod. And by the grace of God, they did, with the forward-thinking Reverend Moussa leading the way, himself serving as the school's Latin instructor during its first years.

But alas, complications from surgery brought his life to a relatively early end. The Lord in His grace called Pastor Moussa home to heaven on April 27, 1928 at the age of 44 years. His sudden loss was described as a "painful surprise...a decided shock...a loss felt by St. Peter's, the Wisconsin Synod, and

the entire Lutheran church of our land."⁴ Reverend H.K. Moussa was a man ahead of his time. He saw the need for Lutheran high schools and fought for the cause, standing firm in the face of the naysayers.

Reverend G.E. Bergemann (1862-1954)

As synod president (1908-1933) and pastor of St. Peter's for nearly half a century (1899-1947), Reverend G.E. Bergemann also proved to be a vital leader during Winnebago's early days. E.C. Fredrich, who served with Bergemann at the Academy from 1941-1948, writes:

Bergemann was an able administrator at a time when the church body needed that gift as never before or since in its history. Even more important, his ministry and his administration, his theology and preaching were thoroughly gospel oriented and permeated. Those who worked with him and those who learned from him agree that this commitment to the gospel was the driving force in this synodical leader.⁵

Gustav Ernst Bergemann was born August 9, 1862 at a farm near Hustisford, Wisconsin. Trained at our Lutheran Theological Seminary by the venerable professors Hoenecke, Notz, and Graebner, Bergemann was ordained and installed as pastor of Trinity, Bay City, Michigan in 1887. He served there and at Tomah, Wisconsin before accepting the call to St. Peter's in 1899. He was elected Vice-president of the Wisconsin Synod in 1907 and assumed the presidency when his dear friend and mentor, President Philip von Rohr, fell ill and died in December 1908.

⁴ Obituary, Hans Kollar Moussa, *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Volume 15, Number 10, (May, 13, 1928), pp.145-146

⁵ Fredrich, Edward C. *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI: 1992, page 189

During his 30 plus as President of the Wisconsin Synod and later the Joint Synod (from 1917 on), Bergemann "gave the WELS its organizational form."⁶ He introduced the Book of Reports and Memorials to be distributed before the synod's conventions, as well as the Statistical Handbook distributed annually to each congregation. He also suggested that leaders from the various facets of the church's organization meet on a regular basis to discuss the form and function of the WELS. Today the idea of this *synodical council* remains intact.

The Wisconsin Synod was \$24,000 in debt in 1907 when Bergemann took office. Even though that debt had been liquidated by 1925, increased operating budgets and building projects (New Ulm, The~~in~~nsville) left the synod some \$696,000 in debt by 1931. Bergemann did struggle mightily to alleviate this debt, but it, along with the failure to resolve the conflict with the Protestants⁷, ^{led} lead to Bergemann being voted out of the presidency in 1933 (the only time that's ever happened in the WELS). Bergemann continued to be willing to serve and he did—as chairman of the Seminary Board of Control and also as pastor of St. Peter's/director of the Academy through 1945.

A man described as strong-willed and punctual, almost dictatorial in manner, but also called optimistic, tireless and unruffled, Bergemann was "a fine

⁶ *ibid.* page 134

⁷ The Protestants were a group, including Seminary professor J.P. Koehler, that left the synod over concerns about the synod's organization and doctrine. Although this controversy was part of Bergemann's downfall, it should be noted though that no subsequent president was able to resolve the conflict with the Protestants.

theologian of the old school."⁸ His concern for Christian education remained unwavering throughout his ministry. Constantly among his people, he always encouraged the youth to consider the preaching or teaching ministry. WLA truly lost a leader and a piece of their history when Reverend Bergemann was called home to heaven on May 13, 1954.

In the summer of 1926, the pledges of financial support were there. The plan was to add a 10th grade for the 1926-27 school year, and one grade each subsequent year until there were full four years. But there was a much more urgent concern during the summer of 1926. The beginning of the school year was fast approaching and the school needed to supply the equipment needed for the addition of another grade. This addition would cost an estimated \$2,000 at least. A generous outpouring brought in nearly \$1100 from early June to early July. This sum included donations from Bergemann (\$200) and Moussa (\$100) themselves! But the July 7, 1926⁹ minutes of the Academy Board reveal that as of that date, they were still \$900 short. The very next meeting reports that interested members had agreed to cover the funds. The minutes from that meeting are dated July 12, 1926. The Board had raised \$900 in 5 days, a sizable sum in those days! A call to teach the 10th grade was extended to Reverend Waldemar Heidtke of Crivitz, Wisconsin and he accepted. Heidtke, by the way,

⁸ Engel, Armin, *The Bergemann Years 1908-1933*, Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, vol. 72, number 4, page 304

⁹ WLA Faculty Minutes (this is the source for much of the material in the paragraphs to follow.)

would become renowned after his days at the Academy when he served as a translator/aide at the Nuremberg trials following the second World War.

The 1926-1927 school year saw the Academy move into St. Peter's former school building where it would be located until 1954. Reverend Walter Hoepner (class of 1929) recalls, "Conditions in the old building were somewhat primitive...morning chapel exercises, noon lunches, as well as the use of water bubblers and toilet facilities, required trips to the new school building."¹⁰ Classes were based on a classical course of study until 1933, when a commercial course was added. Browsing through the first issues of The Viking¹¹, the school yearbook, one finds student contributions in Latin, German and even French. Greek also was offered to the students during the pioneer years.

Already during the early years, Winnebago was attracting students from far beyond the Fond du Lac city limits, including students from Brownsville, Green Lake, Oakfield, Forest, and Van Dyne. These students would either carpool for the daily ride to Fond du Lac, or they received room and board with willing families from St. Peter's congregation during the week.

There was much going on at Winnebago outside of the classroom work. Early music ventures were ^{led} by Reverend Martin Albrecht, who was also in charge of boys' athletics from 1929-1933. At various points in those years, Albrecht ^{led} an all-school chorus, a 62-voice mixed "concert" chorus, and other

¹⁰ Hoepner, Reverend Walter, Winnebago Lutheran Academy 75th anniversary booklet, (still in the pre-publication stages as of this writing)

¹¹ The Viking has been produced for each year of WLA's existence, with the exception of 1936-38 when funds simply were not available. Access to them is available through the WLA office.

select smaller choruses and glee clubs at the students' request. These choirs would perform at the annual Christmas and Spring concerts, appearing on risers built by their own fathers. But an integral part of the choir's duties was to journey to area congregations on Sundays and during Holy Week, promoting the Academy, recruiting future students, and glorifying God in song. Later on, Albrecht returned to Theinsville to complete his studies for the ministry, but he continued to travel to Fond du Lac twice weekly to work with the choir from 1938-1941. Albrecht is also credited with the beginning of the WLA band in 1938. At the time, this 50 member band, played for various organizations, at the annual Rally Banquet, and for home basketball games. Albrecht, together with a student, wrote the alma mater "*We Hail Thee Winnebago*," a song heard at countless athletic events over the 75 year history of the Academy.

Which leads us to another area of extracurricular activity—athletics. Basketball for boys and girls was the popular sport during the early days. Home games were played in the new gym of the new building, with the fans sitting on the stage and literally shaking the walls when their beloved Vikings would take the floor against the likes of Northwestern Prep and Milwaukee Lutheran. Hans Bierwagen receives the honor of being the first WLA basketball coach. But basketball was not the only sport at WLA. An intramural program was developed that also involved students in volleyball and touch football for the boys, and softball, volleyball, and gymnastics for the girls. It should be noted that from the beginning, girls' sports were given equal billing with the fellows, even though

during later years, girls' athletics would retreat into the shadows, a topic we'll discuss later.

Professor Erwin Scharf founded the school's Literary Society in 1934. But even before its official organization, this group was responsible for one act plays, variety-type entertainment and the annual spring play. Students recall fondly the Shakesperean plays "The Merchant of Venice" and "The Taming of the Shrew" mixed in with lighter, more comedic offerings.

In 1938, a group of interested donors chipped in to buy the Academy a used printing press, and thus the *Academy Echo* was born. This student newspaper was produced for many years to come, giving countless students opportunity to hone their journalistic skills.

The years of the Great Depression hit Winnebago hard. Numerous times, the school found itself in danger of going under. Even with the generosity of the individuals of the Association, the school was unable to keep teachers for any length of time because the Academy was simply unable to provide for their financial needs. The faculty minutes from July 10, 1934 show that the Academy on that date had \$1894.33 in unpaid salaries alone. They repeatedly petitioned the synod for financial help, but as we've already noted, the synod had its own debt to the tune of nearly \$700,000. Only by the grace of God, moving the hearts of certain sincerely committed patrons did the Academy continue. Keep in mind, not everybody was completely sold on this idea, particularly during the strained financial times. Some members wondered why they should send their

children to WLA when they had survived so many years without Christian secondary education, especially if their kids weren't going to be pastors or teachers. After all, they were already paying for the city's public high school, Goodrich, with their tax dollars. But patient and persistent education on the part of Bergemann and his counterparts eventually warmed people to the tremendous benefits of this school, to the blessings of Christian education not only for future called workers, but also for future laypeople.

Students recall those years in the "old building" fondly. They remember watching mice scurry across the floor, or finding them napping in boots stored in the school's hallway. They remember frost on the windows and snow seeping in along the windowsills. And they remember making the commute to the new building for classes being held there. On the warm spring days, the commute would take quite a lot longer, with students dawdling on the way to class. However, on frosty winter days the students always seemed to be in a hurry to get from one building to the other!

A couple ^{of} practices from the Bergemann era have continued to this day. First of the all, the annual Rally Banquet was and is an annual gathering where Association members can show their support for Winnebago. Tickets are sold and those in attendance enjoy a meal as well as entertainment. Another organization that is to be noted for its longevity is the WLA Ladies' Auxiliary. Established in 1939, this group has as its goal "to foster interest in the Winnebago Lutheran Academy and to espouse its cause in harmony with the governing body of this

institution and under its supervision."¹² Meeting on a monthly basis, this group has been active in donating needed equipment to our school. Their many years of dedicated and continued service merit their mention here and a well deserved "thank you."

As Bergemann advanced in age, and the Academy enjoyed financial stability of the early 1940's, a decision was made that the Academy wanted a principal who would be available full-time, and who would perform classroom duties as well, so as to remain in touch with the school that he's leading. So the decision was made in 1945 to issue the call to Edward C. Fredrich, a member of the WLA faculty since 1941, to become the first full-time principal of Winnebago Lutheran Academy.

II. The Fredrich/Schaller Years

Reverend Edward Carl Fredrich II (1917-1995)

The preeminent historian of the Wisconsin Synod for many years, E.C. Fredrich had a special tie to Winnebago Lutheran's history as well. Although he served there a relatively short period of time (1941-1948), Fredrich holds the distinction of being WLA's first principal.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on July 20, 1917, Professor Fredrich was raised in tiny Helenville, Wisconsin. After graduating from the Seminary in 1941, he waited several months before receiving a call to serve at the Academy where

¹² Teach Me Thy Way—WLA 50th Anniversary Booklet, page 36

he taught history and religion. But another important development occurred following Fredrich's first year at the Academy. Morton Schroeder writes:

Shortly before the school year began in 1942, WLA found itself without a commercial teacher and a janitor. Fredrich and a colleague were drafted to get the commercial room ready for the new teacher, a young lady who was coming in the afternoon. The men, less than ecstatic, had read nothing in their calls about janitorial service. However relationships improved between Elaine (Schultz) and Edward, helped by school projects they worked on together. By 1944, romance was in the air. Within 17 months, they said their "I do's."¹³

After serving as principal of WLA from 1945-1948, Fredrich returned to the parish ministry for five years in Detroit, Michigan. He then went on to serve professorships at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Dr. Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, before his retirement in 1991. He is credited with writing the definitive history of the WELS in his 1992 book *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*. Professor Fredrich died March 2, 1995, but not before touching the lives of thousands of young people, including the students of Winnebago Lutheran Academy during the 1940's.

Seeing as the Academy was finally experiencing some solid footing, many turned their attention to the school's facilities. With a growing enrollment, the "old building" was becoming overcrowded as well as outdated. Even though the old St. Peter's school had served WLA well for more than twenty years, many began to view a new facility as the only solution. In 1946 plans were drawn up for the new building, but were set aside with great disappointment when only

\$22,000 could be raised in pledges. There was a silver lining however. The funds from the 1946 drive made it possible for the Academy to purchase a piece a land on Fond du Lac's east side. The 12 acres on Merrill Avenue would become the home of the Vikings a short time later.

The 1950's brought a new principal and a renewed building drive for the Academy. Reverend Winfred Schaller actually took over the leadership of WLA in 1948, when E.C. Fredrich took a call back into the parish ministry. Schaller would guide the school through 10 years of change both at Winnebago and within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Reverend Winfred Schaller (1892-1959)

Winfred Schaller, Sr. was born on October 10, 1892 in New Ulm, Minnesota. The son of renowned WELS theologian Professor John Schaller, Winfred and his four brothers all eventually ended up following in their father's footsteps. After graduating from the Wauwatosa Seminary in 1914, Schaller served congregations in Minnesota and Nebraska before taking a call to Michigan Lutheran Seminary in 1921. He taught at MLS until 1948 when he accepted the call to be principal of Winnebago Lutheran Academy. Schaller also taught history at the Academy, in which capacity he wrote a world history textbook that became widely used among other Lutheran high schools. Without a doubt, a highlight of Schaller's ministry at the Academy was the successful rekindling of the desire to build the high school a facility of its own.

¹³ Schroeder, Morton, The Past is Present, The Northwestern Lutheran, November 1997, volume 84, number 11, pages 16-17

In 1953, the building drive was re-opened, but with a slightly different emphasis. It was the consensus that individual patrons could not be expected to fund the a sizable building project, but that the area congregations were ready to shoulder this financial burden. "An all out effort was made to solicit money and subscriptions for the Building Fund. The workers went to all the homes of the members of the eleven congregations involved. When the returns were in, the committee was able to report that \$161,379 had been received in cash and pledges."¹⁴ An incredible sum to be sure, but that was only the beginning! While substantial, the amount collected was by no means enough to finance the building project. The congregations were approached once again to supply the needed funds, even if it meant that they had to borrow themselves to do it. Without hesitation, St. Peter's congregation borrowed \$82,000, with the Forest, North Fond du Lac, Campbellsport, Dundee, and Van Dyne congregations also contributing. Five other congregations were unable to help at the time, but expressed their support and agreed to help pay off the balance in the future.¹⁵

1954 was most certainly a milestone year in the Academy's history. Having realized the benefits of the congregations themselves supporting the Academy, the Association voted to adopt a new constitution which changed the organization from a group of individuals to a group of congregations. The eleven

¹⁴ Teach Me Thy Way—WLA 50th Anniversary Booklet, page 6

¹⁵ Koester, Arthur, Highlights in the History of W.L.A., 1958, unpublished paper available through the WLA archives.

congregations which voted to ratify the constitution and become the charter members of the new Association were:

St. Peter, Fond du Lac	Good Shepherd, Fond du Lac
Redeemer, Fond du Lac	St. Luke, Oakfield
Faith, Fond du Lac	St. Paul, Forest
Trinity, Dundee	Zion, Van Dyne
St. Paul, North Fond du Lac	St. Paul, Eldorado
Immanuel, Campbellsport	

Under this new organization, the congregations would have full control. Each congregation would elect three laymen, who along with the pastor(s) and all male teachers would serve on the Plenary Board. The Plenary Board would meet four times a year and have "full power over calling professors, purchase and sale of property, major repairs and replacements, fees, salaries, curriculum, and the election of the Executive Board which was to meet monthly to take care of other matters."¹⁶ An organization known as "The Academy Patrons" was established for those people/congregations outside the Association who still were still vitally interested in the Academy's affairs, and wanted to support the school.

With sufficient funds secured for the new building project, the cornerstone was laid on September 26, 1954. Reverend Irwin Habeck, 1st vice-president of the Wisconsin Synod was the guest preacher. Throughout the 1954-1955 school year, the project progressed until the new structure was complete and dedicated on June 6, 1955 with Reverend Clayton Krug (WLA Class of 1934) preaching the sermon. Those present at the service remember the day fondly, the day they glorified our merciful Father for bestowing on the little Academy a place they

could proudly call their own. The generous hearts of the Association members were once again exhibited as they donated much of the money to equip the new school. The students chipped in as well, conducting student projects to pay for the chapel and the auditorium seating.

The total cost of the building came out to approximately \$360,000, a much higher number than originally expected. Add to that the neglect on the part of individuals to fulfill their 1953 pledges, and the Academy was again facing a financial crisis. \$145,000 was borrowed from AAL with a goal of having the mortgage liquidated within 5 years. To achieve this goal, the Winnebago Academy Mortgage Burners' (WAMB) Club was established. The idea behind the WAMB Club was to enlist 750 members to pay \$2.00 monthly. At the rate of \$1500/month, the debt could be eliminated very quickly.

Being a student at WLA in the late 40's and early 50's would've meant that you were familiar with the WLA Annex on the corner of Park and Merrill. The Academy purchased this sizable residence as both a teacherage and a dormitory for girls in 1950. The Annex provided a practical way to house out of town students until well into the 1960's.

In addition to all the other changes of 1954, WLA was approached by the Synod and asked if they would serve as the headquarters for the new Emergency Teacher Program. During the 50's there was a critical shortage of women teachers in the WELS, and this program would help alleviate the situation by

¹⁶ Teach Me Thy Way—WLA 50th Anniversary Booklet, page 6

training female high school graduates one year in Fond du Lac and two summers at DMLC. The synod agreed to provide two instructors to carry the additional classroom burden and also agreed to pay the tuition for the students of the program, as well as a portion of the building maintenance. The program continued until the late 1950's.

The 50's were times filled with turmoil synod-wide. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, with whom the WELS was in fellowship, was straying ever further from Confessional Lutheranism, gradually becoming more lax both in doctrine and in practice. Because of this, the WELS made repeated attempts to admonish the Missouri Synod in a Christian manner. When they refused to listen, a division occurred in our Synod as to when according to Scriptures we should sever our fellowship ties with the LCMS. Some individuals and some congregations in the WELS felt that the Synod was in error for maintaining fellowship with Missouri as long as we did. This group said that we should "avoid" the false teaching church body in accordance with Romans 16:17. These individuals felt conscience bound to break ties with the WELS, because in their opinion, the Synod was too lax in severing the ties with LCMS. This break off group eventually became the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC)¹⁷, and had a profound impact on at least two congregations in the WLA Association. Reverend Robert Reim, WLA Class of 1934¹⁸ was serving Redeemer Evangelical

¹⁷ Heiges, Reverend William, The CLC & Its Effect in Fond du Lac, 1980, WLS Essay File, EF 1909

¹⁸ Robert Reim was the son of WLS Professor Edmund Reim who had served St. Paul's, Forest in the 20's and 30's.

Lutheran, Fond du Lac at this time. Pastor Reim felt conscience bound to break fellowship with the WELS, and resigned the pastorate at Redeemer when the congregation voted to remain in the synod. The ramifications were many, foremost of which was the loss of two Winnebago professors, James Pelzl and Principal Winfred Schaller who also left the synod, and therefore resigned their calls to WLA, a school affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod.¹⁹ Less than a year after Reim's departure, both pastors of St. Peter's, Fond du Lac announced that they had broken fellowship ties with the WELS. Pastors Gerhard Pieper, who had succeeded Moussa at St. Peter's, and Waldemar Scheutze, who arrived in 1958, divided their congregation by insisting that they were the shepherds of that particular flock and that the real St. Peter's was where they were. After terminating their calls at St. Peter's, the pastors put an ad in the local paper saying that St. Peter's Lutheran Church would conduct services at Roosevelt Junior High School on Sunday, February 14th. Of course, Pastors Pieper and Schuetze would be presiding. The members of the true St. Peter's viewed this as a threat and bad feelings prevailed. As you can imagine, the bitter feelings continued to grow as the two pastors started a CLC church in Fond du Lac (Luther Memorial), which at one point grew to approximately 1200 members. Although it still is painful to some in Fond du Lac, the story of the CLC controversy is included here because it is a very prominent event in the history of the Synod, and in the history of the members of the WLA Association.

¹⁹ It should be mentioned that Schaller had actually resigned as principal after suffering a heart attack in 1954. He remained on staff until the break of 1958, and died the following year.

III. The Zuberbier Years (1954-1976)

Reverend Traugott W. Zuberbier (1910-)²⁰

At 40 years of service to the Academy, Reverend T.W. Zuberbier holds the distinction of the longest tenure of any WLA faculty member. A native of East Bloomfield, Wisconsin, Zuberbier was born June 25, 1910. After a formal education at DMLC, he graduated in 1930 and became a LES teacher at Emmanuel, New London, Wisconsin and St. Martin, Winona, Minnesota, before coming to the Academy in 1947. He served as acting principal from 1954-1957 when Schaller fell ill, and received a permanent call as principal in 1957. Also in 1957, Teacher Zuberbier was received by colloquy into the pastoral ministry having completed the necessary homiletics and Greek courses at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. During his 40 years at the Academy, Reverend Zuberbier taught Religion, mathematics, and music, as well as directing the school choirs. He still lives in Fond du Lac, together with Laura, his wife of 68 years.

Recovering from the divisive CLC controversy was only one of many hurdles for the Academy to overcome in the 1960's, and one of the highest was the retirement of the debt from the 1954 building project. For years, the WAMB Club had been the only source of income for reducing the debt. The Club never did reach its goal of 750 members, thereby making it impossible to fulfill their goal of wiping out the debt in 10 years. In 1965, when the contract expired, the loan was re-financed and 8 area congregations agreed to pick up a portion the

²⁰ Meet the Faculty, The WLA Arrow, 1959, volume 15, number 1

payments. "If their monthly quota was not reached through WAMB contributions from members of the congregation, the difference would be paid out of the church's treasury."²¹ Following this method, in addition to memorials and individual contributions, the final payment was made on February 24, 1970. Once again through the grace of God motivating strong commitment in the Association members, the Academy building at 475 East Merrill Avenue was finally paid off.

But already WLA was faced with new challenges and obstacles. The present enrollment was growing and therefore space was becoming increasingly limited. As early as 1968, the idea of a building expansion had begun to take shape. In the years that followed a proposed \$700,000 expansion project was presented to the congregations. The majority of the congregations rejected such a major undertaking, having just stepped out from under the heavy burden of 1954 debt. The proposal was revised to include only those projects that were immediate necessities. These included a commons, a band room, a library and several additional classrooms. The congregations of the Association approved this revised plan and agreed to pay ½ the total upon completion of the building and the other ½ in monthly payments over the next ten years. Less than a year after the groundbreaking in May 1971, WLA dedicated its building expansion on February 20, 1972. Reverend Robert J. Voss, the Executive Secretary of the

²¹ Teach Me Thy Way—WLA 50th Anniversary Booklet, page 10

Synod's Commission on Higher Education (and former pastor of Association member Faith, Fond du Lac), was the guest speaker.

The Zuberbier years saw many notable advancements in student life. Athletically, Track was introduced as a team sport in the spring of 1960. Since the early days WLA has enjoyed much success on the track. The girls' teams in particular have been successful winning state championships in WISAA Class B both in the late 70's and again in the early 90's. By the way, it should be mentioned that girls' sports were dropped at the Academy in 1948, but were reinstated in 1973. Today girls compete interscholastically in volleyball, basketball, softball, track, cross country, and soccer. The Zuberbier years also saw the fulfillment of a desire long-expressed within the Association. That is the desire for an Academy football program. The Academy board in 1962 gave its approval to add football as a non-budgetary item. Over \$4000 was raised by the students and by alumni who favored the addition of the sport, and Mr. Raymond Spangenberg was named head coach, a position that he'd hold for over 20 years. Today, the Viking football team is lead by Reverend Richard Zahn, whose coaching career is highlighted by a perfect 12-0 record and a WISAA B State Championship in 1986.

Much of the credit for the athletics program's rise should go to long-time Athletic Director Raymond Seibel. A Winnebago graduate himself, Seibel headed the Viking baseball program well into the 90's, earning himself an honor from the Wisconsin High School Baseball Coaches' Association in 1992.

The WLA band also blossomed in the 60's when Mr. William Fuhrman was called to be the full-time band instructor in 1965. One just has to stand back and marvel at the incredible gifts God has given to WLA through its faculty members, and the Zuberbier years were especially noteworthy in this regard. In addition to the names already mentioned, during these years (1957, 1959 respectively) the Reverends Jackson Petrie and Leroy Ristow²² joined the staff beginning a combined half-century of service the Academy. Mr. David Lauber joined the staff in 1964, and has remained one of the most well-liked (unless you were sitting in his office!) and respected faculty members to ever walk the halls of the Academy. Mr. Lauber remains the Vice-Principal to this day, and still finds time to teach various sections of the English curriculum. He has made regular formal recruiting trips to all the grade schools of the Association (although at times they have proven to be quite informal!) and also coaches a forensics team that perennially contends with some of the top-notch teams in the state.

In 1973, Zuberbier asked to be relieved of his duties as principal, but consented to remain as principal until a successor could fill the position. Over 3 years later, Mr. John Schibbelhut accepted the call to become, strictly speaking, the fourth principal in WLA history.

²² Ristow had actually served at the Academy as an "emergency instructor" during the years 1930-1933, before completing his schooling in Thiensville.

IV. The Schibbelhut Years (1976-1991)

John Schibbelhut (1934-)

A Colorado native, Mr. John Schibbelhut^{was} graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College in 1957. He served grade schools in Colorado and Crete, Illinois, before accepting the call to the Academy in 1976. During his years at Winnebago, Mr. Schibbelhut had the opportunity to teach Compostion and Sociology, as well as Religion and other English courses. He also served as yearbook adviser, head cheerleader/crowd supervisor and ex officio appointee to the janitorial staff. In fact when he left in 1992 to become a professor in DMLC's secondary education program, there was much indecision among Board members as to what the call to take his spot on the faculty should entail—he had served in so many different areas! He occupied the principal's office for 15 years, before stepping down in 1991.

John Schibbelhut's tenure at the Academy was a time of change as the Academy continued to grow both in terms of enrollment and in terms of a broadening curriculum to meet the demands of modern educational standards. Classes in Art, Woods, Electronics, and other electives were added during these years, as well as an expanded Special Education program to meet the needs of the Academy's students. A Guidance Department was established in order to better prepare the students for life after WLA. Groups like the THINK Team (Teens Helping Individuals Needing Kare), the "Adopt-a-Grandparent" Program, and the "Academy Kids" swing choir can trace their origins back to these years.

The Student Council, established in 1970 became increasingly active. They sponsored much of the annual Homecoming festivities and planned the "Bike Hike" trips where students would be bussed to a location and be allowed to tour the area on bicycles. Students from the Schibbelhut years fondly remember the annual trip to Washington, D.C. organized each year by Government/History teacher Mr. Tom Niedfeldt. They also recall an era of school spirit that might arguably be unsurpassed in WLA history. This spirit was especially evident at sporting events during the 1986-87 school when the school's boys' athletic teams won conference championships in football, basketball, and baseball. Rarely was there ever an open seat in Winnebago's "cracker box" gymnasium that basketball season!

But the crowding at home basketball games, the athletics' teams practicing in the school's hallways until late in the evening—these were symptoms of an urgent need. The school had outgrown the 1954 gymnasium and many of the classrooms in the original structure as well. It was time to add on. In 1985, the Plenary Board approved plans to move ahead with a \$1.4 million dollar expansion project. The plan called for turning the existing gymnasium into two levels of classrooms, freeing up rooms for classes like Art and Home Economics, and preparing for the technology explosion that had already begun to invade the educational system. Through a tireless volunteer work campaign, led by Principal Schibbelhut himself, the Academy saved close to \$200,000 in expenses. The 2nd story walls, the finish work, the ceiling tiles, the

sod-laying on the football field, and even some electrical work were all covered by volunteer labor. In 1988, the school proudly, thankfully dedicated a brand new gym, locker rooms, a remodeled chapel, an improved athletic fields, and an expanded commons.

Once again, the financial responsibility for this massive project was placed on the shoulders of the Association congregations who gladly accepted the challenge. For the 22 congregations of the WLA Association, there were two options. They were asked to either borrow the money themselves or WLA would borrow the money and the congregations would make monthly payments to them. The "Thanks A Million" offering truly showed the generosity and support of the people of the Association, a theme that has been repeated time and time again during Winnebago's history. The EXCEL-90 program soon followed in an attempt to liquidate the building mortgage and operating deficit, as well as prepare for future planned financial hurdles. Time and time again, the support shown by the lay people of the Association has proven overwhelming! They are truly the lifeblood of a thriving Academy, a family blessed by God.

But the 90's brought even greater blessings and even greater challenges for Winnebago. Leading the school as successor to John Schibbelhut was a WLA graduate himself, Mr. Randy Westphal, WLA Class of 1967.

V. The Westphal Years (1991-Present)

Mr. Randy Westphal (1949-)

Born February 3, 1949 in Bonduel, Wisconsin, Mr. Westphal was educated in the Winneconne public schools before becoming a student at WLA, where he graduated in 1967. Upon graduation from DMLC in 1971, he served congregations in Oshkosh, Onalaska, and Algoma, Wisconsin, before accepting the call to return to the Academy as principal in 1991.

If one word could sum up the 90's at Winnebago, the word "growth" would be at the top of the list. By the grace of God and to his glory, the Academy family today numbers over 40 staff members charged with the Christ-centered education of 458 students, hailing from the 34 congregations that make up the Academy Association. The enrollment of 458 is up over a hundred students from the 345 enrolled in 1991. Due to the extreme overcrowding, a cap of 120 students per class was imposed and then removed in 1999 by the Plenary Board as expansion once again loomed in the near future. This growth has once again brought about the need to build, this time with a proposed \$6,000,000 project. The "Forward in Trust" project has been divided into three phases. When all is said and done, the Academy will have a new chapel/auditorium to seat upward of 600 people, a new music complex, expanded science facilities and additional office/classroom space.

As the enrollment has grown, so have the opportunities to broaden educational/social horizons. New sports programs have been added including

wrestling, girls' softball and soccer under the direction of Athletic Director Steve Berg, who took over for Raymond Seibel in 1992. Home construction class and a Spanish program are now among the classes offered.

Growing class sizes and growing educational opportunities have made for exciting times at the Academy in recent history. This school's concerns are probably similar to many other of our Area Lutheran High Schools: Keeping the Association congregations informed and involved, wrestling with questions of church fellowship and an enrollment policy, efforts to remain somewhat current in an ever-advancing world of technology, and striving to maintain the delicate balance of training both future called workers and future lay leaders of WELS congregations. But perhaps the greatest challenge is one expressed by Principal Westphal himself, "It is the difficulty of keeping Christian education focused on Christ." That is, to remember what sets WLA apart from any other fine educational institution and to make it a daily emphasis in the classroom, no matter what subject is being taught. Our Savior not only provides the motivation for our learning, but also the actual material that we learn. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights." (James 1:17) And therefore, every spelling test, every history class, every algebra lesson originates from and relates to God's love for his people. Keeping this ever before the minds of teacher and student alike is the greatest challenge the Academy faces, but what a joy and blessing it is to accept this challenge day in and day out in the classroom!

So even though this history has mentioned many of the *people* and *events* that have made up WLA's first 75 years, there is a message that runs even deeper. Even though the faculty and student body have changed in immeasurable ways since 1925, there is a common thread running throughout the decades. Jesus Christ is the constant. It is my sincere prayer that Winnebago Lutheran Academy will remain firmly built upon that Foundation, teaching Jesus' sheep and supplying God's kingdom with Christian servants, no matter what field of service our gracious God has in store for them.

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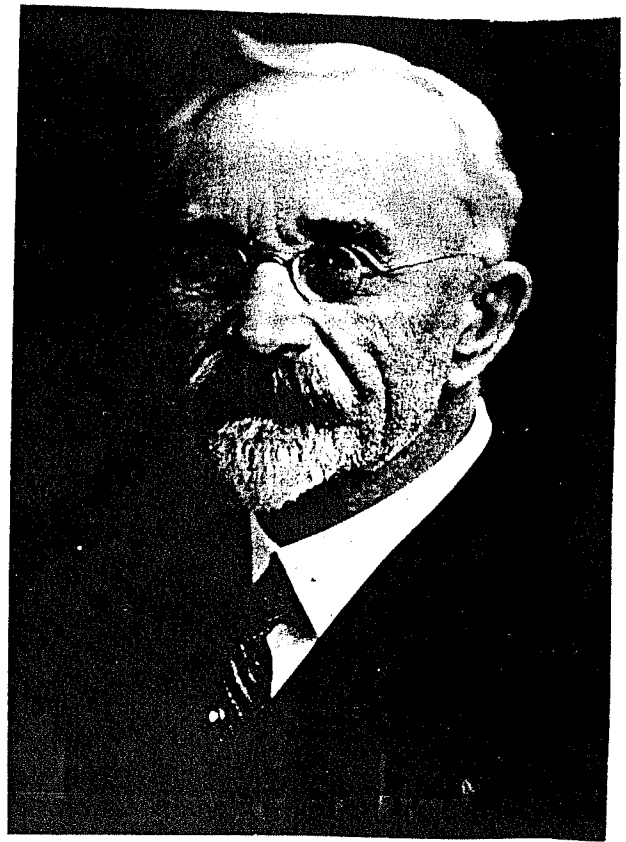
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Rev. Hans Kollar Moussa



Rev. Gustav Ernst Bergemann



M. Toepel

R. Sievert

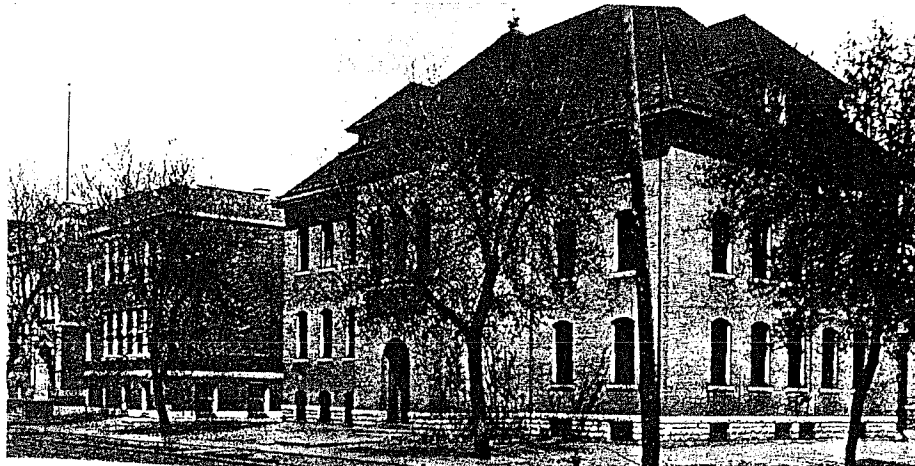
M. Albrecht

H. J. Vogel

W. Pless

H. Bierwagen

Winnebago Lutheran Academy Faculty
1938-1939



The Academy--1925

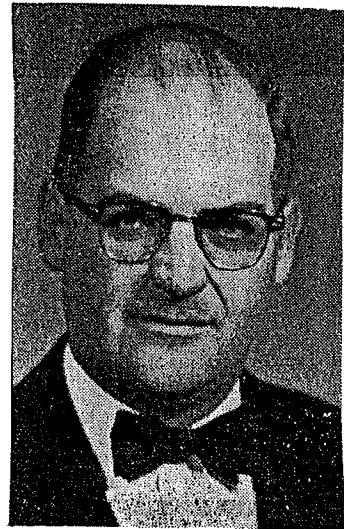
Winnebago Lutheran Academy Principals



Rev. Edward C. Fredrich
1946-1948



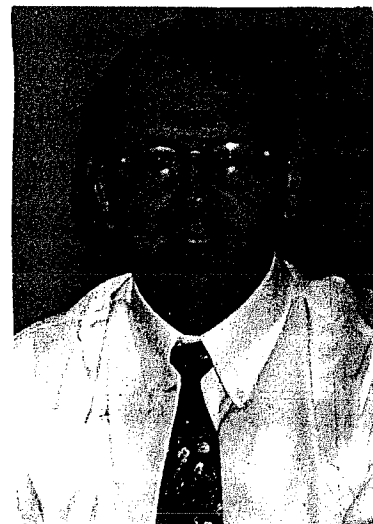
Rev. Winfred Schaller
1948-1954



Rev. T.W. Zuberbler
1954-1976



Mr. John Schibbelhut
1976-1991



Mr. Randy Westphal
1991-Present