

Senior Church History
5-1-95

Prof. Brenner
James Turriff

Interview with Prof. Edward Fredrich

It was in December of 1994 in class that Prof. Brenner offered an opportunity to see him if anyone still needed a topic for their church history paper. I took him up on his offer and that's how this video came about. I remember that Prof. Brenner made the comment that it would really be a shame if someone didn't get some of the thoughts of one of our church bodies' greatest modern historians down on paper. This suggestion prompted me to call Prof. Joel Fredrich at NWC, his son and my old Latin teacher. In this phone call I asked whether or not Prof. Fredrich's health would be up to letting himself be videotaped and he told me that he'd get back to me. He called me back with an affirmative answer and then I got in touch with Prof. Fredrich and set up a time for our first interview.

In the meantime, I spoke with several Seminary professors (Panning, Balge, and Brenner) in order to find out some points of interest to discuss with him during our interviews. They all had some helpful suggestions and agreed that getting some of Prof. Fredrich's thoughts down on tape would be helpful.

I was able to meet with Prof. Fredrich twice in the month of January and the video tape shows the results of these meetings. I had never met Prof. Fredrich before our first video session, so I'm not quite sure how much his health had gone down hill. It is obvious that was very sick with pancreatic cancer. I thoroughly enjoyed my visits with him and appreciated the extra effort that he had to put forth because of his illness. He was called home to be with his Lord on March 2, 1995.

I was honored to be able to participate in his funeral service as one of the special honor guardsmen on March 5, 1995. At the end of the funeral President Panning took the opportunity to speak a few words basing them on Hebrews 13:7,

"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." Pres. Panning referred to his years of service at the Seminary both as a teacher and as a writer. In the index of the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly 152 articles bear his name. Panning also made reference to his great contributions as a historian saying that he "saw history as God controlling and guiding the events of the world" and that he pointed his students eyes always to the "greatest event in history, the resurrection of God's Son."

This assignment was a great experience in being able to meet and hear the views of a man whose book, The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, is now one of my textbooks in the Senior Church History course at the Seminary. To be able to get to know a little bit about the man who has taught so many students and had a positive effect on their lives was inspiring.