

PASTOR ED LINDEMANN- "DEAN" OF NWC (1974-1995)

***SYNOPSIS OF VIDEO INTERVIEW CONDUCTED
ON APRIL 18, 1997***

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April 20, 1997
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(Oral Interview)

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If you asked a pastor this question, "What do you remember about your days at Northwestern College", you would probably get a host of answers- COS parties, sports, FORUM, the battle with Greek & Hebrew, dorm life, grassers, etc. If you asked someone who had been on the Northwestern campus during the years 1974-1995, though, you would also likely have to add to that list "Dean Lindemann". When you say this name, many things come rushing to one's mind- fines, Ylvisaker, "Da", cigars, the mustache, the glasses, and many more. Whatever your memories of Northwestern College are, Dean Lindemann is quite likely to be included.

I loved my years at NWC. From the professors, to the tutors, to the classes (sort of), sports, and friends, it was nothing but enjoyable. I also tremendously respected Dean Lindemann. I guess it is for this reason that I choose to interview him for my Senior yr. Church History project. I figured it would give me a chance to relive some of those fond memories, to learn about his "tour of duty" in Watertown, and to see what made and continues to make this "dinosaur" (his word, not mine) tick. I was not disappointed.

Our interview took place in the basement of his house in Pardeeville, WI at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, April 18, 1997. He is currently pastor at St. John's Ev. Luth. Church in Pardeeville- a church with approximately 800 members. After exchanging greetings, and discussing how the interview was going to work, I just decided to start the tape, and see what would happen. You'll

notice that the agenda for my interview was divided into six parts:

- I. Introduction
- II. Biographical information
- III. The ministry prior to 1974
- IV. Years as Dean of NWC ('74-'95)
- V. The ministry after 1995
- VI. Concluding remarks

What I would like to do now is simply give a short synopsis of parts II through VI.

II. Biographical Information-

The video itself sheds light on many points of interest concerning Dean's early life- how he was born to a farming family in Muskego, WI in the year 1936. What I personally found amazing here was the curved road which the Holy Spirit used to bring this young man into the ministry. Each of us has our own story of how we wound up at NWC and the Seminary, Dean Lindemann's just happens to center around football. It was football that brought him to Northwestern Preparatory School, and it was football (and friends) that brought him to Northwestern College. "Unfortunately", as he stated, "The Seminary didn't have football", so he just used his friends as motivation for moving on. This was a person who, for a long time, didn't know what he wanted to be or do.

III. The Ministry prior to 1974-

Even before coming to Watertown as Dean of Students, Pastor Lindemann had a fascinating ministry. Dean explained how he received his "call" from then President Toppe following his Middler year at the Seminary to serve as a tutor in the Prep department at NWC. Obviously, the Seminary student, Ed Lindemann, already had an excellent handle on what tutor's responsibilities were when he explained to me, "Pres. Toppe asked me, 'Do you know what a tutor does', and I answered, 'Sure,

he babysits a bunch of kids”.

It was very interesting , and exciting to hear Dean Lindemann describe the two congregations he served in the parish (St. John’s in Stanton, NE & Salem in Loretta, MN) and the memories that these two places still hold for him. He detailed how these churches cherished “Christian Education”, and how they let their love for the gospel shine through in their churches’ fellowship, stewardship, Bible Study, and evangelism. Once one talks to Dean about his first experiences in the parish ministry, it becomes evident that the person who had once been an indecisive, football-minded student, quickly became an extremely focused public servant of the Lord.

Years as Dean of NWC (1974-1995)-

The focus of my interview, and the part I most eagerly anticipated, was dealing with his days in Watertown. I experienced no problems at all coming up with questions to ask him. The problem was just the opposite- deciding which questions I would have to leave out for time’s sake.

One of the tutors I interviewed in preparation for talking to Dean stated, “You don’t really appreciate Dean Lindemann unless you know him”. Whether I understand him better now after two hours of interviewing I don’t know, but I did gain a better appreciation for why he did things the way he did. Immediately in this portion of the interview, he stated that his purpose as Dean was to “get as many qualified students to the Seminary as possible”. It was a responsibility he took very seriously.

Even though Ed Lindemann is only one person, he wore many different hats of responsibility while at the Watertown campus. He considered himself as teacher, counselor, go-between, coach, and perhaps most importantly “Pastor of the College”. It is under this last sphere of responsibility that Dean also took on the role of disciplinarian. Regardless of what I sometimes thought in college, this

was not something that Dean enjoyed doing. As Pastor, though, he had to. An interesting point was made when he noted that when he would be forced to let somebody go from the college, he made sure to drive home the point that they were “expelled, not excommunicated”. Although sometimes it felt as though his discipline had a law flavor to it, his decisions were always gospel-based.

Beyond his relationship with the students, Dean Lindemann also worked intimately with the tutors and faculty. I had the opportunity to get feedback from all of his tutors by questionnaire, by phone, and in person, and I can say it was truly amazing how every one of these men showed extreme respect for Pastor Lindemann as “Dean”, and immensely enjoyed their time working under him. Whether it was having the tutors over to the house, going out for a beer and a hamburger, or walking the dorms so the tutors could get out for awhile, Dean truly treated his tutors as “brothers in the ministry”.

As you could tell by Dean’s demeanor, positioning, and volume, he became less aware that there was a video tape rolling as the interview went on, and seemed to just be sitting around chatting with a former student. This became evident when I asked him the *“I’d be remiss if I didn’t ask you about this”* question, “Has your perspective or feelings about the amalgamation changed or only become more solidified”. He in no way beat around the bush with his answer, but truly showed his feelings about this still-touchy subject in our Synod. Quotes that I will remember include his statement that this was “God’s judgment on an unappreciative Synod”, and that the way it was gone about was “dishonest”. Whether you agree with him or not, his comments were extremely thought provoking.

On the whole, though, Dean Lindemann couldn’t help but have a grin on his face for most of our discussion concerning his years at NWC. He obviously loved his time there, and cherishes the memories (all you have to do is look at the wall in his basement- it was filled with nothing but

Northwestern memorabilia).

The Ministry after 1995-

“Dean” Lindemann served for twenty years- “43 semesters” as he put it- in Watertown. As he packed the car, though, and headed to Pardeeville, WI in the summer of 1995, he would, from then on, only be known to his members there as simply “pastor”. Things to a certain extent have changed for “Pastor” Lindemann, but they have also greatly stayed the same. He’s still dealing with sinners and saints. He’s still using the Word as a sword and shield, and he’s still preparing people...preparing them for works of service for the Lord. The description I received as we toured the church was one of a congregation with a lot of potential, and one with a lot of growing yet to do. With the arrival of a second pastor, Rev. Kevin Cortez, there seems to be great excitement for what the future could hold for St. John’s in tiny Pardeeville, WI.

Conclusion-

My interview concluded at 12:40p.m. with this question, “If you had the attention of the entire WELS right now, what encouragement would you give as we enter the 21st century”. His response was simple, yet imperative to always remember, “Stay close to the Word”. He encouraged all of us to keep watch, looking out for those who would try to destroy our synod- both from within, and from without- by taking the focus away from the preaching of God’s Word in it’s truth and purity. His concern was also that we don’t allow numbers and money to always dictate what we do as a synod, but to simply “let the Holy Spirit do his work”.

Another concern that Dean expressed, and wanted me to include in this paper, was the amount

of debt that some of our pastors are bringing into the ministry. On two separate occasions, he voiced disapproval at how much Seminarians are required to pay for their schooling. He also stated that if students are going to continue to pay so much, then they should be paid when they get out in a way as to be able to pay back what they owe. The statements he made concerning this issue weren't solicited or from any sort of bitterness, but rather were concerns from a concerned pastor and father.

The objective of my oral history paper on Pastor Ed Lindemann was for it to be informational, motivational, and to a certain extent... entertaining. In all of these areas, the subject of my interview more than helped me to hopefully accomplish these objectives.

Undeniably, the name "Ed Lindemann" is probably not uttered by every person in our synod with a huge smile on his or her face, he would be the first person to state this truth. Nevertheless, for many of us who were fortunate enough to have been on the campus of an old school that doesn't exist any more from the years 1974-1995, there is only respect for him. What I will take from this experience is that this is a man who loves the Lord, and loves the opportunities he has had to serve him- wherever that service has taken place.

John H. Boggs
April 4, 1997
CH Interview
(Rev. Ed Lindemann)

PASTOR ED LINDEMANN- "DEAN" OF NWC ('74-'95)

Interview Agenda:

- I. Introduction
- II. Biographical Info.
- III. The ministry prior to 1974
- IV. Years as Dean of NWC (1974-1995)
- V. The ministry after 1995
- VI. Concluding remarks

Introduction:

(Identify Dean, topic of interview, date, etc.)

Biographical Info:

- 1) When and where were you born?
- 2) Please tell us a little about the Lindemann family- How would you describe your childhood/ early adult years?
- 3) How were you influenced to study towards the pastoral ministry? When did you know you wanted to be a pastor?

The ministry prior to 1974:

- 1) What was your reaction to hearing "Tutor, NWC" at Call Day, 1962?
- 2) How did your view of NWC as a student differ from that as a tutor?
- 3) Did the two years from Senior at the Seminary till the parish bring any challenges as you were then assigned to Stanton, NE?
- 4) How did your years at St. John's and Salem prepare you for being the Dean of Students at Northwestern College?

Years as dean of Northwestern College (1974-1995):

- 1) You had been at NWC as a student and as a tutor. How did you approach it when you arrived as "Dean of Men"?
- 2) Within your first few months back in Watertown, what aspects of the school did you deem had to go? Could stay? Needed to be modified?
- 3) If you could prioritize, how would you rank your responsibilities as Dean?
- 4) When it came to your responsibilities as teacher, how did your curriculum and the school's curriculum change from 1974-1995?
- 5) Many of your former tutors described you as "the Pastor at the College". What did they mean by this?
- 6) Obviously, part of your duties had to do with evaluating the students who came to Northwestern. What qualities were you looking for in incoming students? What qualities were a red flag? What kind of student did you find it hard to deal with?
- 7) As "Pastor", you were also in charge of discipline. How did you approach this? What situations were hardest for you to deal with?
- 8) Were there ever any pranks which you couldn't laugh at outwardly, but did inwardly?
- 9) Not only did you have to deal with the students on a daily basis, but you were also a member of the faculty. How did your association with the students affect your relationship with the faculty? What about vice versa?
- 10) I would also like to talk about your relationship with your tutors? What would you do to bring incoming tutors up to speed?
- 11) Your former tutors praise you up and down, and shared fond memories with me about working under you. How did you attempt to foster this attitude between you and your tutors while at NWC?
- 12) I have asked a lot of your former students this question, "How would you describe Dean Lindemann". How would you have answered this over your twenty years in Watertown?
- 13) I recently heard this statement in one of my interviews, "You don't truly appreciate Dean Lindemann unless you know him". Would you agree or disagree with this statement?

- 14) You've been away from Watertown for two years now. I'd like to just go back for a moment now and reflect. Why do you feel the Holy Spirit had you personally serve him for over twenty years at our Synod's pastoral training college?
- 15) What about Northwestern Prep? How well did the two schools work together?
- 16) How did the college stay the same/ change from 1974 to 1995? How did the student change? How did you?
- 17) Finally, I'd like to ask you about the Amalgamation. Martin Luther College has been in existence for 2 years now. Has your perspective or feelings about the amalgamation changed in that time or only become more solidified?
- 18) What do you feel will be the biggest challenge for MLC in preparing future pastoral candidates?
- 19) What are some regrets, if any, you have when you look back at your years as dean? What was your biggest accomplishment?

The ministry after 1995:

- 1) From Dean to Pastor at St. John's in Pardeeville was quite a switch. How did you adapt? Did you have to relearn anything?
- 2) What does a typical week for "Pastor" Ed Lindemann now look like? How would you characterize your congregation?
- 3) How has the ministry changed from your Pre-dean years to Pardeeville?

Conclusion:

- 1) In twenty years, when someone interviews you again and asks you, "What do you remember and cherish most about your ministry", how will you answer?
- 2) If you had the attention of the entire WELS right now, what encouragement would you give as we enter the 21st Century?

(Thanks, closing remarks)