

An Interview With Prof. Martin Westerhaus
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CH331 Prof. Brenner

Upon contacting Prof. Westerhaus in regards to doing the video, I immediately learned how humble a man I was dealing with. It took some convincing on my part to secure the interview with him. But, he finally consented after I explained to him that Prof. Brenner had suggested him as a subject. Prof. Westerhaus said he would do it as a favor to Prof. Brenner, whom he considered a good friend, and to myself.

I had seen Prof. Westerhaus on campus before during my previous years at WLS, but had never had an opportunity to speak with him. We all have heard of him mentioned by professors in our classes, but that was about the extent of most of our knowledge. With this in mind I was eager to spend some time with him and get to know him better.

Prof. Westerhaus had an extremely interesting childhood having grown-up on the NWC campus. His father was a history professor there and listening to Prof. Westerhaus talk about the experiences and changes that took place during his time there brought back fond memories of my two years on that grand campus. His memories of getting to know almost all of his professors both during his prep years and colleges years outside of the campus seemed to serve him well. He mentioned how he never thought of them as the enemy as some of the other students may have, but rather as family friends. I believe that attitude was ~~been~~ adopted by future faculties at NWC, at least I felt it was that way. It wasn't a them against us feeling, but a we're in this together attitude.

Prof. Westerhuas also mentioned that his father was also a driving force in many of the decisions he made in his life. From pursuing the full-time ministry to traveling

over to Oberursel for continued education at the Seminary. He was able to do quite a bit of travel during his time there, which fed his appetite for history. I caught the sense that he wishes more men had the opportunity to go over and study there.

Prof. Westerhaus has had an extremely interesting full-time ministry. His first call was to a small congregation northwest of Hartford, Zum Kriplein Christi. He was pastor there for 11 years and also started a Lutheran elementary school, which he taught for four years. I can't imagine what it must have been like to care for the needs of a family, a congregation and teach eight grades. But he truly cherished all of his responsibilities and plowed ahead even after his mysterious paralysis. The resolve of this individual is truly amazing but you'll never hear Prof. Westerhaus make much of it. It was all in a day's work and challenges that the Lord had put before him. His account to me of how he surprised not only the congregation but also his wife by one day walking into the pulpit again is priceless and something I'll never forget.

Prof. Westerhaus continued his teaching ministry at Wisconsin Lutheran High School where he taught religion and German. He felt that it was a natural change and an opportunity that he looked forward to. At times during his ministry both parish and teaching he admits that he felt inadequate, but he would agree with Prof. Scharf when he said the servant of the Lord who isn't nervous or doesn't feel at times inadequate that person I don't want to listen to. Therefore he would simply advise a young pastor to work hard and pray. Words of wisdom from a man who has indeed followed his own advice.

An intriguing part of Prof. Westerhaus' history is how he became synod archivist. When I asked him this question his initial response was that of smile and a bit of a chuckle. The

reason for this was I had suggested that he had been asked, but on the contrary he was simply informed that he was it. He accepted the job willingly, after all as he put it, mother synod had spoken what was I going to do. He thoroughly enjoyed the work of organizing the materials it fit in well with his love of history and his experience in the library.

Which is perhaps what he is most proud of. He is proud that the library is considered to be so user friendly especially for those who are already out in the field. He says that to be complimented about that makes his heart glad.

Prof. Westerhaus is a man of many talents but if you spoke with him he'd try to make it sound as if he had none. He's thankful for the opportunity to serve his Lord in the full-time ministry as long as he was able and to share the good news of Christ crucified and risen with others. He cherishes his memories and wishes the Lord's blessings to all those who continue the work.

Your father having been a professor at NWC, what was it like to grow up on that campus, what are some of your most memorable moments?

What about living there during the depression?

What are some thoughts about some of the changes you saw take place at NWC and in particular the amalgamation?

Who would you say had the most influence upon you and your entering schooling for the full-time ministry?

Which of the NWC professors if any made a big impression on you?

What made you decide to go over to Germany to study and why do you think there has been a decline in men going over today?

What can you share with us in regards to your studies at Oberursel?

Where did you start your ministry? Was it at Zum Kriplein Christi, just northwest of Hartford?

What was the most rewarding part of the parish ministry?

Your first official call into the teaching ministry was to WISCO, what can you share about that portion of your ministry?

How much did your disability play into receiving that call, if at all?

What were the circumstances that led up to your disability and where is it at now?

I understand that you were quite the athlete and a very active person all-around, what went through your mind when the Lord laid this at your door?

How do you feel your disability changed or effected your ministry?

Did you ever feel nervous or inadequate about being able to fulfill your duties at any time in your ministry?

What advice would you give to a young pastor starting out?

Do you have any extremely memorable experiences from your years at WLS?

What was the most rewarding part of your teaching ministry both at WISCO and WLS?

When were you approached to serve as synod archivist and whom did you replace?

What was the biggest challenge you faced in setting up the new library?

The library is extremely user friendly especially to pastors out in the field. What gave you the vision to make it such?

How big a role do you feel history plays in the overall curriculum at WLS?

What are you most thankful for during your ministry?