

### 3. TRAINING COMPLETED 1934 - 1935

I have no recollection of difficulty in getting back to the books for this final year at the St. Louis seminary. I did feel somewhat like an elder statesman since I was only one of two of us who had started at the Sem in the same class in the fall of 1929. So the whole student body of over 400 was new to me. Perhaps Dean Fritz thought that I could shed some light on changes that had taken place during the previous three years. At any rate he invited me in for a conversation about the changes in the student body attitudes that I observed when comparing my earlier years with the present one. One very noticeable change was the attitude of the students toward their preparation for the ministry.

In my first two years any student who became involved with the "Mission Society" was regarded as a kind of sissy. As a result only a small number participated in any undertaking of this type. Now the majority of students in all classes seemed to want involvement in any activity that provided some extra training for their future work. Caught in this trend I too volunteered to assist the city missionary in his Saturday rounds as an observer. Then he gave me some assignments, such as instructing individual adults in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

One incident related to this type of assignment comes to mind. A lady confined to her bed with TB, whom I was instructing, came up with an unusual question one day. She had been reading in her Bible and came across the statement in one of Paul's letters: "It is better to marry than to burn." This statement disturbed her because she had never married and now such a prospect was out of the picture. She wondered whether this meant that if one didn't marry would one burn in the fires of hell. Here I was, a young unmarried student, having to explain to her that this simply meant that it was better for a person to become married than to "burn" with the flames of passion outside of marriage.

At another time the missionary asked me to accompany him for a Baptism of a baby born to one of the TB patients and to serve as a witness. In trying to get detailed information about name, etc. from the mother beforehand he was told that the child's name was Willie B. Smith. But he wanted to know for the records what the B. stood for. The mother's answer was: "I don't know. I just want him to be called Willie B."

During the 3 years of my absence the whole athletic program had been altered. In order to provide more programs of a cultural nature with the student fees, all team competition in basketball and baseball had been discontinued. As a result there was no basketball team. Nor was there a baseball team in spring. As a result some former players in these sports joined teams in the city recreation leagues. Since we had no gym on campus no intramural league was possible either. I did play a few times with a community team. On some Sunday afternoons I refereed games for the city's Walther League sponsored leagues.

In the fall season some group organized a local tennis tournament. So I brushed up on the tennis I had played during my prep school days at Winfield and earlier at the Sem and entered the tournament. Having left the sport idle for at least 3 years I didn't expect to advance very far in the competition. Besides, I was a kind of unknown in the student body so far as this sport was concerned. However, as the competition continued my earlier skills returned and I was able to keep on advancing toward the finals, never losing even a set in any of the matches. My competitor in the final was named Barth, brother of the later Seminary president, and I was able to dispose of his challenge without losing a set as well. When spring came and another tournament was held I was unable to participate because I was recuperating from an appendectomy. So someone else took the crown.

To return to the subject of attitude changes it seemed to me that the depression and lack of

calls had a sobering effect, resulting in a more serious approach to what the profession required. Therefore, there seemed to be a desire to be as prepared as possible for an opportunity to go to work whenever such an opportunity was presented.

During the course of my vicarage a cousin of mine and her husband had transferred their teaching activity to a suburban St. Louis congregation at Jennings. It was with one of their friends and members that I was able to store my Essex since students at the Sem were not permitted to own and keep on campus any automobile unless this was needed to get to and from a part-time job and then one had to get a special permit.

However, they both taught in the two-room school. On some weekends I was invited to their home on Sunday. But I also came in handy twice during the winter when they needed a substitute during an illness. The first time I was to substitute for him in the upper grades and I could be briefed the night before on customary procedures. So the day progressed quite well without incident. The second time was in the time of first semester finals. They phoned later at night to see whether I could arrange to come over the next morning to substitute for her in the lower grades. It so happened that I had just one final left and that was at an early hour. So I was able to get to the school around 10 a.m. But there had been no time or opportunity to discuss procedures with her so I came into the room without any knowledge of her rules or procedures. As a result even before the noon recess the little 1st graders had already "pulled my leg." One of them completed his assignment of work quite quickly and asked for permission to go to the library. Not knowing what alternate task to give him I granted the request as a harmless one. This opened a floodgate of similar requests by the other 1st graders. When I mentioned this to my cousin at the end of the day, which I believe was a Friday, her response was "Those little stinkers. I never allowed them to go to the library because they can't read anyway." At any rate we were able to keep a semblance of orderly activity going for the day.

I recall that for one Sunday a preaching assignment had been passed on to me by the dean's office. It was about 40 miles from the Sem. So I got my car the night before and traveled there in time for the first of two services. When I arrived there, the pastor had not yet left for his mission festival preaching assignment at another church not far away. So he carefully briefed me on his customary procedure. I recall him explaining in detail that when I turned from the altar to the congregation this had to be always done the same way except after the benediction. He warned me that if I did not do this the people would be upset because he had seemingly taught them that this was the only right way and any deviation would be a disturbing infraction of the rules.

At Christmas time I arranged to travel to Bear Creek to spend the holiday vacation with Edna at her home. To help cover the cost of travel with my car I arranged for 3 passengers who would help pay the expenses at less cost to them than any public transportation. One of them I dropped off at Milwaukee and the other two rode with me all the way to Shawano. However, one of them and our baggage had to ride in the rumble seat. In order to keep the one whose turn it was to ride there reasonably comfortable in the open air in December, we took with us extra blankets with which he could cover himself to keep warm. Everything went fine on the 500-mile trip north for the weather cooperated beautifully.

However, the day when we were to travel back to St. Louis a heavy fog had moved into the entire region. Although we tried to get a reasonably early start we had to travel more slowly than usual so that it was almost noon when we picked up our last passenger in Milwaukee and we still had 400 miles to go. As long as it was daylight we could travel at a fair rate of speed. However, when darkness set in it became more difficult to see the road ahead. So one of us had to stick his head out the side window to make sure that we stayed on our side of the two-lane roadway. At times it seemed that we only crawled along. Consequently progress was slow. We were already on old route 66 when the air became heavier near 3 a.m. and we stopped for a lunch

break around Springfield with another 100 miles to go. While we stopped there and could close the trunk lid, a heavy downpour cleared the air. When this had passed thru and the rain subsided the rumble seat rider could get back in and not worry about getting soaked as we made the last leg in another 3 hours. However, by that time it was almost time for breakfast and classes starting at 8 a.m. We did not get too much out of the first day's classes but recovered from the ordeal within a day or two. Later that day I had to put my car into storage again until spring.

Around the beginning of March I had spent a Saturday with the city missionary even though I felt nauseated for some unknown reason all day, I remember that I even went to a drugstore and took an Alkaseltzer, hoping to settle my stomach. However, after the evening meal my roommate decided that we better call the school doctor. When he examined me he was unable to pinpoint the problem but had his suspicions. He did feel that it would be wise to go to the Lutheran Hospital the next morning, Sunday, for further checking. When they took a blood count they were sure that I had an inflamed appendix. I recall that the doctor told me that we had two options: either have the appendix removed immediately or wait a few days and possibly be faced with a burst appendix. My response was that I was ready to go ahead with the surgery if he was. So while they prepared me for surgery I had my roommate, who was with me, send a telegram to my parents to inform them of what was happening and to phone my cousin to tell them about the course of events. As a result by noon of that day the operation was completed but I was still coming out of the spinal anesthetic that they had used into the late afternoon. At any rate I faintly recall the Seminary dean paying me a visit in my hazy condition and also my cousin and her husband stopping in to check on me.

Since the Lutheran Hospital also ran a nursing school, there were quite a few student nurses on duty, among whom was a cousin of mine who was in training there. It was interesting to have a different student nurse giving me my daily bath in the 6-bed ward where I was. At least I had a brief visit with quite a few of the students

and my cousin usually stopped in every day to check on my progress toward recovery. My recovery, they said, was unusually rapid. Ordinarily they kept patients in the hospital 10 days after an appendectomy but I appeared to have recovered sufficiently to return to school on the 9th day. On the 10th day I moved slowly and attended a few classes I had that day. That must have been a Wednesday. From then on progress was very noticeable.

But in order to avoid any kind of rupture of the incision from activity the doctor had ordered me to wear what I called a girdle for a period of six weeks. Even after that he ordered me to restrict my activity so far as sports were concerned. The most strenuous activity I engaged in until graduation, I recall, was an occasional game of horseshoes and regular evening walks in the balmy spring air of St. Louis.

One interesting and amusing thing I remember about the pastor at Jennings where my cousin and her husband taught was his habit to preach for 40 minutes. I clearly recall his sermon on Palm Sunday and Confirmation. I thought he had given a fine sermon in the first 20 minutes, but then he looked at his watch, which he kept on the edge of the pulpit stand, and saw that he had another 20 minutes to go. In that period he kept repeating himself so that, to my way of thinking, he actually spoiled the impact of his fine message. This taught me a lesson to "get up and say what you had prepared and then quit" regardless whether it was more or less than your usual time.

For my graduation both Edna and my mother came by bus. Both were able to stay with my cousin at Jennings. During their short stay we were able to do just a little sightseeing before Edna joined me in taking my mother back to Nebraska. Since I had no job in sight and prospects for any kind of paying job around my home were very slim, I decided to take Edna back to her home in Wisconsin and hope that I could find work around there again.

Back in Wisconsin for the summer I stayed with Edna's family. I don't recall whether she was at home at the time helping her mother with cooking for the crew during the time their

shingle and lumber mill was operating or whether she went back to her job at Oshkosh. At any rate we were able to spend quite a bit of time together even if only on Sundays. For some of the time I worked as a member of the crew at their mill. At other times I had jobs helping farmers with their haying. Then there were again some repair jobs for the insurance company. Seemingly I had no problem finding enough jobs to keep solvent. I clearly recall the last job I had before a sudden change in plans took over.

Since I had worked a couple summer periods with the long-time barn builder, who had become quite a friend, he remembered me when he took a job to reframe old barn timbers into a machine shed. This included cutting new tenet holes for braces at designated locations in the old timbers after he had carefully planned the layout. For this routine job he would need help. So he talked the farmer into hiring me as his carpenter's helper. Well, the first morning he was not quite ready for my direct assistance so the farmer put me to work building a new split door for his barn basement. I knew how to proceed at building a door to cover the full opening but I had never made a two-piece or split door before. So my friend came to see how I was doing when he took a break from his work. Then he in his kindly and patient way quickly told me how to proceed in this instance, indicating that in this case you basically build one door to cover the whole opening and then you cut it in two at the center, after putting in cross pieces and braces at the proper locations. In that way the two parts fit together snugly.

When he had me start drilling the 2-inch wide holes for tenets in the timbers, which he said were made of rock elm, a very hard wood, the bit in the drilling device was really put to the test although he kept it quite sharp, the wood was tough. As I struggled to keep turning the two handles, I snapped off the bit. He credited me with being the first fellow who in all the years of his experience had broken a bit as he went about replacing it. Gradually we got the timbers ready for raising and the shed's completion. However I was not there to see this procedure or have a part in it.

It was while I was at this job in about mid-September that a letter came (you didn't use phones much in those days except in extreme emergency) from the Seminary dean who recalled my earlier three years of teaching. In the letter he asked me to take a job of teaching in Houston, Texas, where another Seminary graduate had started the school year but had received his first call into the ministry and needed a replacement for Oct. 1. The pay that was offered was \$25 per month plus board, but the board was donated by interested members on a month by month basis. This meant moving to a new boarding place at the end of each month. Since this was activity in the service of the church I could hardly refuse the assignment. So I wound up my affairs in Wisconsin in time to make the trip to Houston, which was paid for by the calling church. With that kind of salary I could not afford to keep a car there. So I traveled to my home in Nebraska and left my car there, taking with me my old trunk filled with what I thought I would need. Whether I traveled there by train or by bus I don't recall, but I was able to get there by the date set. So began another chapter in my earlier experience.