



Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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Issue 4

Oral History 101

As an assignment for his "History of the Lutheran Church in the United States" class, Professor Erling Teigen asked his Bethany Lutheran College students to "interview someone who has participated in some part of our history - church body, congregation, or educational institutions." "The interview," said Teigen, "had to be recorded, with the tape to be turned in and a paper prepared. The paper could either be a transcription/edited form of the interview, or a narrative based on the interview." The following is an edited interview done by Bethany student Ted Petersen, with his grandparents, "Gig" and Alice Solli. The Solli's attend Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, MN.

As you read on, remember that this is the kind of thing we can ALL do with family members, friends, church members, to capture their memories. We may not be doing it for college credit, but our incentive and "pay off" is nonetheless obvious. Read on:

Not many people make it to their Seventy-Year College Reunion. Gerhard "Gig" and Agnes Solli did. Because both of them are over 90, they certainly had a lot to offer as far as the history of Bethany goes. Since they are my grandparents, on Saturday, April 8th, 2000, I had the chance to have a conversation with them. I sat on the couch where I had sat hundreds of times and just chatted. The following is the result of our conversation.

Ted: When did you attend Bethany?

Gig: I attended in '28 and '29.

Agnes: And I attended in '29 and '30.

Ted: So you were there for '29 together?

Both: Yes.

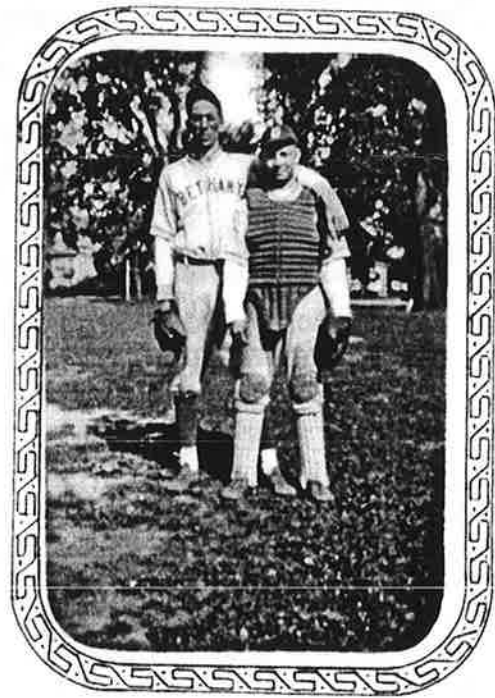
Ted: Did you go to high school at Bethany?

Gig: I went in Tacoma.

Ted: Did Bethany have a high school back then?

Gig: Yes, but I went to the school in Tacoma.

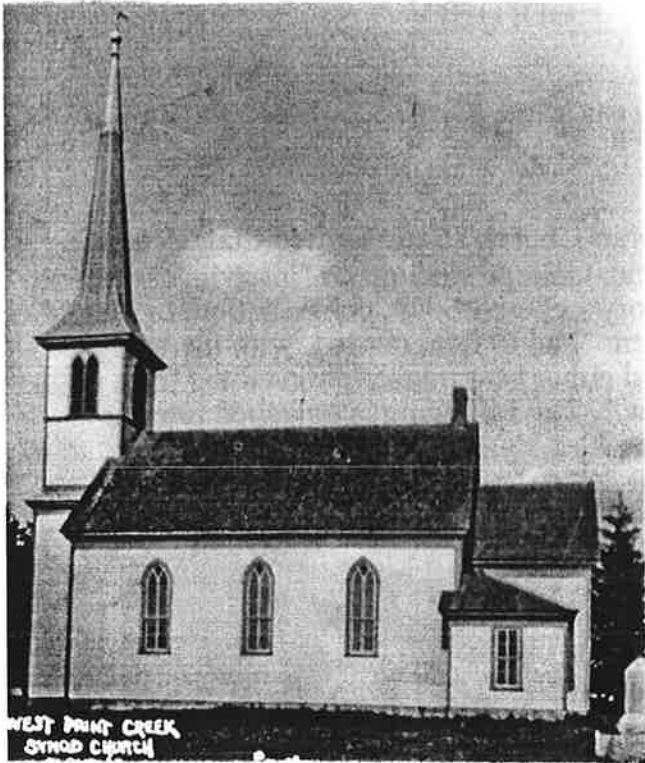
Agnes: I went to high school in Boone, Iowa.



Gerhard "Gig" Solli (right), with fellow Bethany baseball team member, Walt Meyer (father to current Bethany president, Marvin Meyer), in 1930.

(continued on page 4)

Anniversaries



West Paint Creek Synod Lutheran Church,
organized in 1851.

Once again, Oak Leaves notes the landmarks of churches and Christian Day Schools within our synod. This is by no means a complete listing. The editor encourages church members who know of upcoming anniversaries and other historical dates in their churches and schools to contact us. We will be happy to print articles about your histories and anniversaries.

150 Years Ago:

East Paint Creek Synod Lutheran Church, Waterville, Iowa, organized. West Paint Creek Synod Lutheran Church, Waukon, Iowa organized. The Rev. H.A. Preus organizes the Newport Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, and St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church,

Portage, Wisconsin.

145 Years Ago:

Trinity Lutheran School (P-8), West Bend, Wisconsin, established. Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, West Bend, Wisconsin, organized.

120 Years Ago:

Norwegian Grove Evangelical Lutheran Church, Gaylord, Minnesota, organized.

110 Years Ago:

Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church, Cottage Grove, Wisconsin organized. Forest Evangelical Lutheran Church, Forest City, Iowa organized.

80 Years Ago:

Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Princeton, Minnesota, joins the ELS.

75 Years Ago:

Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Cross, Madison, Wisconsin, formed. First South Wild Rice Lutheran Church (renamed Calvary in 1964), Ulen, Minnesota, reorganized.

70 Years Ago:

First Trinity Lutheran Church, Marinette, Wisconsin organized.

60 Years Ago:

Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Hampton, Iowa organized.

55 Years Ago:

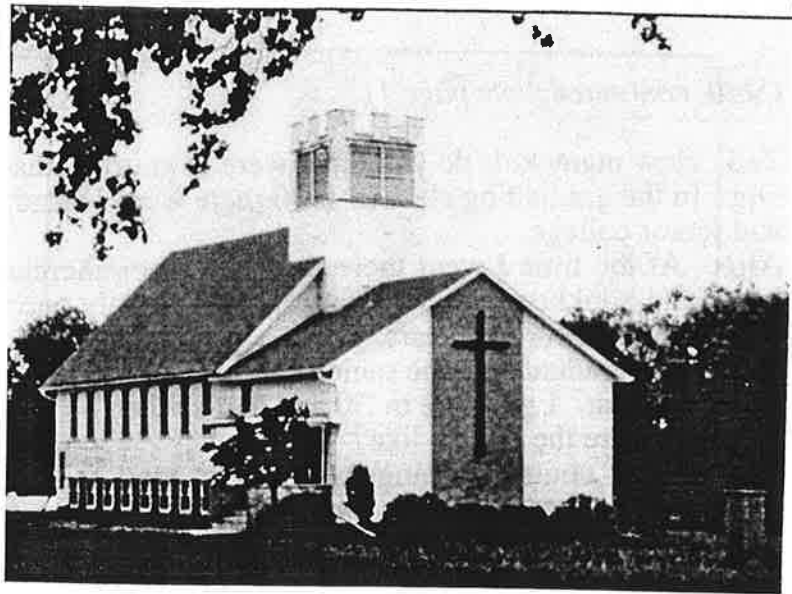
Lakewood Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington, organized.

50 Years Ago:

Trinity Rose Dell Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jasper, Minnesota, joins the ELS.



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, West Bend, Wisconsin was organized in 1856.



Norwegian Grove Evangelical Lutheran Church, Gaylord, Minnesota: organized 1881.

45 Years Ago:

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Weston, Ohio, organized.

35 Years Ago:

Lakewood Evangelical Lutheran School, Tacoma, Washington, established.

30 Years Ago:

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Bloomer, Wisconsin, joins the ELS. Faith Lutheran Church, Parkersburg, Iowa organized. Heritage Lutheran Church, Apple Valley, Minnesota, organized as a mission congregation and joins the ELS. Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, Alpena, Michigan, formed.

25 Years Ago:

Faith Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas joins the ELS. Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church, Richardson, Texas, organized. Grace Lutheran Church, Vero Beach, Florida, joins the ELS. St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Myrtle Creek, Oregon, joins the ELS. Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Okauchee,

Wisconsin, joins the ELS. Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Elderon, Wisconsin, joins the ELS. St. Martin Lutheran Church, Shawano, Wisconsin, joins the ELS. Bethany Lutheran Elementary School, Port Orchard, Washington, established.

15 Years Ago:

Hope Lutheran Church, West Jordan, Utah, formed. Peace Lutheran Church, Jefferson City, Missouri, organized.

10 Years Ago:

Faith Lutheran Church, Litchfield, Illinois, organized. Family of God Evangelical Lutheran Church, Fort Mohave, Arizona organized. Elementary School of Dr. Martin Luther, Plzen, Czech Republic, established.

5 Years Ago:

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church, Detroit, Michigan, joins the ELS.

May the Lord continue to bless these and all of our churches and schools through the coming years.



(Solli, continued from page 1)

Ted: How many kids do you think were in your [Bethany] class?

Gig: In the graduating class in 1930 there were 18 and that included both the high school and junior college.

Alice: At the time I went there they had a commercial course. It was just typing, short hand, and bookkeeping. So I was really there only one year, but I graduated with the kids that were there for two years.

T: So you graduated in the same year?

A: Same year. I graduate in '30 and that's when he graduated.

T: What were the classes like?

G: Well, of course the languages, it was kind of slim then. We all had English, and I took the languages, German and Latin the first year, and I continued in Latin and took first year Greek in the second year.

T: I suppose they had classes like History.

G: Yes, I took a history course.

A: He was studying, intending to be a minister and changed later on. So that's why he was taking so many of the languages. But I was intending only to be working as a secretary in the office, so I took subjects like that. And we were only two in that class.

T: Were a lot of the guys that went there intending to go into the ministry?

G: Several of them. I think the total was four.

T: How does the college seem different to you now?

G: Well, it's modernized in many ways, of course, and there are almost ten times as many students. We were in the forties and now it's in the 400's.

A: And of course we were all in one building. The boys' dorm was connected - with a closed door, of course - to the girls' dorm.

T: How recognizable is the Old Main and that classroom building?

G: Part of it has changed, the dormitory rooms have all been modernized, but the old entryway is just like it was.

T: Is that where there's "Bethany" on the floor?

G: Yes, I used to mop that as a student.

T: What were the dorms like?

G: Well the boys all had roommates. They were paired off; there were some double rooms. Two boys would live together.

A: I understand they are much more liberal with what you can do or not do these days. We were under strict rules. If we wanted to leave the campus, we had to sign out. We would get to go downtown if we wanted to, but we had to let them know about when we would be coming back. There was one girl that they didn't trust too much. My roommate and I got permission to walk downtown and they said, "Will you take her along and keep watch over her because she'll try to get away?" Well, we said we'd try it, we didn't know if it was a good idea. But we got down to the business district and she disappeared, and we didn't know what we were supposed to do. But we shopped as much as we wanted to and we started back toward the college, and here she showed up. So we got her back with us. She was always in trouble. And she was a pastor's daughter!

T: What kind of rules did they have?

G: Study hours were from after suppertime until 9:30. Then we were free from 9:30 until 10, and at 10 the lights went out. I was over 20 years old! I worked a while after I graduated from high school.

T: Was there any policy about guys visiting the girls in the dorms?

G: Yes, there were very strict rules separating them.

A: Oh that would be terrible (if the boys went into the girls' rooms). There was a reception room at the top of the steps and at certain times on a weekend, they would allow the boys to come up and visit the girls in that reception room, but it was through supervision. And there were times when they'd have to wait.

T: Prof. Teigen told me to ask you about the "NitWit's Club", what was that all about?

G: Well that was all the boys in the dorm. I don't remember that they had many meetings. I think it was more after I left. But there is a picture of the bunch; they just dressed crazy. As far as the activities were concerned, I don't even remember. It was really after my time.

T: What was student life like with chapel and the strict schedule?



The 1930 Bethany Lutheran College Choir. **Top row, left to right:** Art Solli, Gig Solli, Adella Gullerud, Lloyd Mumson, _____, Martin Galstad, Sonoma Huso, Rudy Strom, Agnes Olson, Tom Heller, Wilford Huso, Walter Gullixson, Stan Huso. **Middle row, left to right:** E.J. Onstad, Esther Thone, Edna Olson, Edna Aasen, _____, Aleda Olson, Gudrun Teigen, Charlotte Nolte. **Front row, left to right:** Gladys Aasheim, Ruth Jansow, _____, Myrtle Schulz, Director Walter Buszin, Olga Lillegard, Myrtle Huenerkoch, _____, Mrs. Onstad.

G: Well, you were supposed to go to chapel. They had chapel in the morning at a certain hour everyday like they do now. But they also had chapel at night after the evening meal. And then the study hours started right after chapel.

A: If you didn't go to chapel, they would come up to the dorms to find why. Were you sick? Or there had to be some reason if you weren't there. So everybody had to go. And they counted, they knew if you were there. So they get by pretty easy now a days. The bell would ring for mealtime, it was time to go and eat. And everybody came at the same time, just one certain time for meals to be served. We had certain tables to sit at. There were six at each table. And you were to keep that same place for, was it two weeks? Or something like that. Then they would change them again. And we would often have one of the faculty members at our table to keep things going right.

T: Would there be guys and girls sitting at one table?

A&G: Yes.

(continued on page 8)

Help the Archivist

The ELS Archives has dozens of photographs which need to be identified. We show a few of these on the next two pages. Can **YOU** help identify the people in the photos?



This photo was taken at the 1922 Synod Convention, held at *Our Saviors' Lutheran Church*, Madison, Wisconsin. Pictured here are the pastors (and delegates?) in attendance at the convention. Can you identify any of the men not already known?

Standing, left to right: Christian Moldstad, _____, _____, S.C. Ylvisaker, G.A.

Gullixson, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____,

_____, S. Sande, H.A. Preus, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.

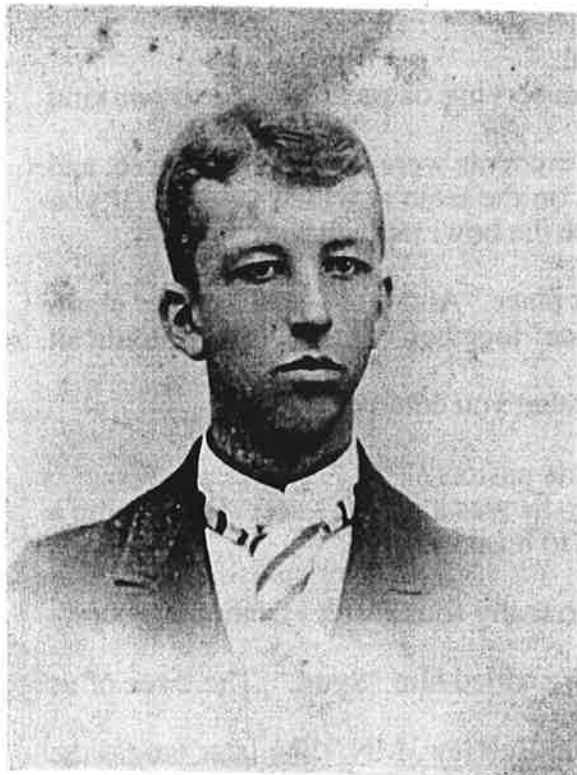
Kneeling: H. Ingebretson, _____, _____, Bjug Harstad, John Moldstad, Christian

Anderson, _____, L.S. Guttebo, _____.

Other pastors in attendance, according to the 1922 *Synod Report*, were: D.M. Gullerud, G. Guldberg, C. Hansen, J. Hendricks, L.B. Jensen, M.F. Mommsen, H.M. Olsen (pastor at *Our Savior's*), A.J. Torgerson, J.B. Unseth, C.U. Faye, K.L. Guttebo, C.N. Peterson, J.J. Strand, J.E. Thoen, B.A. Midden, and M. Fr. Wiese. Can you match the names with the faces?



This portrait, likely of a sibling group, was taken by photographer W.A. Fermann, of Stoughton, Wisconsin. A name, "Bredesons" appears on the back. Do you know this family?



This cabinet card portrait was taken by O.E. Borloug, of Decorah, Iowa. Is this young man an ancestor of yours?

The ELS Archives has many other photographs that need to be identified - family groups, wedding portraits, confirmation portraits. Many have no information which would help to identify the people in them. ELS Archivist Norman Holte and his assistant, Rev. Walther Gullixson, welcome help from anyone who may have information about these photos.

Those interested may view unidentified photographs at the ELS Archives during regular working hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 a.m. until noon, or at other times by appointment. The ELS Archives and Museum is located at 6 Browns Court; Mankato, MN 56001 (in the basement of the ELS seminary building). To make an appointment, or for those having information regarding the photos shown here, please call the Archives at: (507) 344-7854. Archivist Norman Holte may be reached at (507) 388-4308 and Walther Gullixson at (507) 388-5969.



(Solli, continued from page 5)

A: They were mixed

G: We drew numbers.

T: How were the meals?

A: They were very good.

G: Especially on Sunday!

A: We had a very good cook. Every dinner had some kind of meat and potatoes, a vegetable, a salad, and a dessert. Of course, you had no choice; you would just get what they served. It was always very good, but you found there are kids who would complain, no matter what they served. But most of them liked the meals and gained weight on them. I know I and my sisters came home for Christmas vacation. My mother had been sending us boxes of food throughout the year.

G: And candy.

A: Oh yeah. And she said, "Well I'm not going to send any more food, you're getting too much as it is!" It was really delicious meals.

T: What did they serve on Sunday?

G: On Sunday we had ice cream.

A: Yeah that's right. We would get a dish of ice cream. The noon meal was the dinner, where you would get roast beef, mashed potatoes, salad, and dessert.

T: Did they serve breakfast?

G: Yes.

T: Would it be a hot meal or was it cereal?

G: It was I think cereal. Sometimes we had oatmeal.

A: It was the same thing for everyone. If they were serving oatmeal or some other kind of hot cereal, everybody got the same thing.

G: You came in and sat with your table. And then students were appointed to serve, and you'd serve for a week waiting tables. You'd wait on the table at which you sat. If you ran out of something, you'd go to the kitchen to have the bowl replenished.

T: So you wouldn't go through a line?

A: No, we had a certain place to sit; that was your place. And you stood by your chair, until everyone was there, and then you all said "Grace" together. Then everyone could sit down at the same time.

T: Did they have student jobs, like work-study jobs that you could do?

G: I guess some of them did.

T: Who are some of your fellow students that became pastors?

G: Martin Galstad was in our class. Lloyd Mumson, he was a pastor's son. He became a pastor, but he didn't serve very long. He went back to business.

A: Torald Teigen.

G: Yes, and Eivind Unseth. He was in my class. So really four pastors from the group.

T: Who were your roommates?

G: I roomed with my brother and Eivind Unseth. We called him "Spud." The three of us roomed together.

A: I roomed with Amanda Jacobson. She came from Belview, MN. She later taught the commercial subjects at Bethany for two or three years.

G: I was going to say that my brother was in the same class, and he was a budding artist. He designed the banner for the Bethany Scroll, the school paper. And he had his initials very small in one spot, and they had been using it for years. And once in a while he'd

draw something for the paper.

T: I supposed they didn't have many pictures in the paper?

G: Oh yeah, not too often.

A: And we were the very first Bethany college choir?

T: Tell me about that, did you guys tour?

G: Oh yeah, we toured in 1930. We even went to Chicago and several places in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

A: It was on one of those choir tours that Gig and I became engaged. But as soon as school was out, I found a job in an office in Boone, IA. And Gig went on to school. So we were engaged, but we were going to wait a while. He finally decided he didn't want to go into the ministry so we were married and he worked at Bethany for quite a while.

T: What did you do at Bethany?

G: I worked as an engineer. I took care of the boilers, repaired things that needed fixing.

T: Maintenance man, kind of?

G: Yeah, the janitor work was done by the students. If the equipment broke, I'd have to fix it. I had to work off my school debt. It wasn't very big, but neither was the pay! I worked about a year or so.

T: Do you remember how much it did cost to go [to Bethany]?

G: About \$300 a year. That included tuition and board and room.

A: I had two sisters going there at the same time. They were in high school and I was in college. So my father had to pay nine hundred for the three of us.

T: I suppose back in that time that was a lot of money?

A: They seemed to think it was plenty.

G: Two thousand a year was good pay for a teacher's salary. I think the president got 25 hundred.

T: Did they have theatre or drama at Bethany?

A: They did have some. Two other fellows and I put on a skit that I wrote called "Dr. Jekyll and Mrs. Hyde." And the doctor was a dentist. And my roommate was the dentist. I was the kid that was going to be taken to the dentist's office. The one that played my mother had false teeth; he had an extra set of uppers. And after certain turmoil to get a kid to sit, I didn't want to sit in the chair, and I fussed around. He would slip me the set of teeth while he was working on me, wiggle around and all of a sudden, he has them in a pair of pliers and he shows the audience - a whole set of teeth, and they just roared. They had what they called Bethany Days. We had to put it on an extra time. So we showed it one evening three times. Yeah, monkey business.

T: I'm sure it was fun though.

G: Oh yeah, we enjoyed it. Getting the clothes you know. Of course the outfit of dentist was easy. A long white gown and a mustache made him look mature. The one that was my mother, he really had a job getting a dress that fit. We had a lot of fun.

T: Was there a band?

G: Later.

A: Not while we were there.

G: Several years after that. I was through, but I played snare drum. Professor Julian Anderson played clarinet. And we had another professor that played bass horn, but we had about 15 people.

A: That was later on; we weren't students then.

A: The year we went there, there was no band, but there was a choir.

T: Did they have sports?

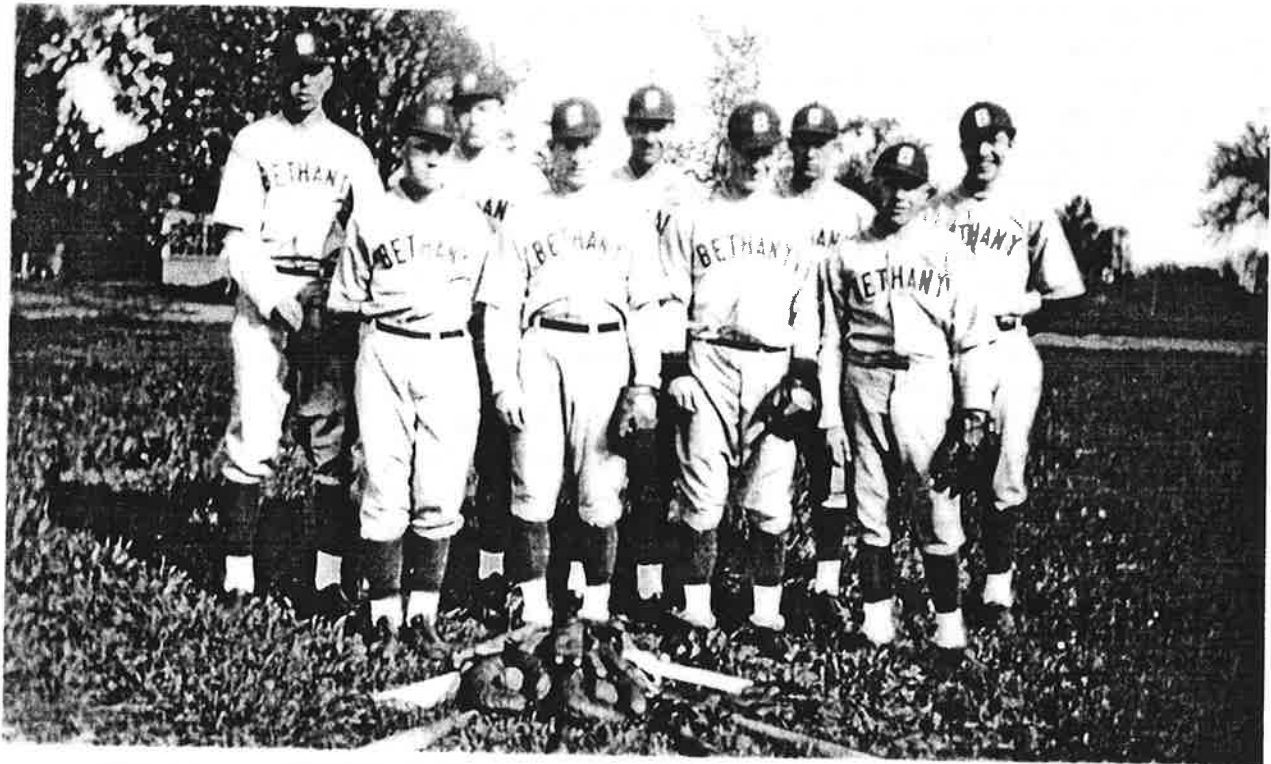
A: Yes, you've seen the baseball team [photo], haven't you?

T: I have.

G: Very first one. Uniforms were new. We just put them on and had the picture taken.

A: Lost every game though, didn't you? As I remember.

G: Generally.



"Uniforms were new. We just put them on and had the picture taken."

Bethany's first baseball team, 1930. **Left to right:** Walter Meyer, _____, Stan Huso, Gig Solli, Torger Torgerson, Art Solli, Harold Mellum, Wilford Huso, Lloyd Mumson.

T: I suppose you have some stories from playing on the baseball team.

G: Oh boy, well I was the catcher. I went to Bethany a couple years after I graduated and took languages. I played on the team. Nobody said a word!

T: So you were probably 21 or 22 playing on the junior college baseball team.

A: Sure.

T: Did they have basketball?

G: Oh yeah, we had a basketball team. We didn't win many games, I remember one game; we lost 7-6!

A: The gym was inside the building.

G: It was a gym on one side, and we had a swimming pool too. They filled that in or bridged over it and built in offices in the later years.

T: What was the roof like on the gym? I suppose the ceiling was fairly low.

G: Well, it was high. To begin with there was a balcony on one end. You know where

the showers were, do you? As you come down the same stairway, you turn right and turn right again, to go to the mess hall, the dining room. As you make that first and second turn. And about half way to the dining room, to the left, there was a door and the showers right in side. We could lock it from the inside. When the girls were in the dorm, we had to lock it. It was kind of a mess. We'd dress for basketball, and after practice, we'd shower, and put our clothes back on and leave, and anybody could then go in there. The pool was right off the dressing room.

T: Did they have showers in the dorm building?

G: No.

T: So those were the only showers?

G: Yes.

T: So guys and girls used the same showers?

G: Yes, and in the toilet rooms, it was just bathtubs, sinks, and stools.

T: What was the most memorable thing that you can remember from Bethany?

G: I always thought the choir, the choir rehearsal. I thought more of that and enjoyed that more than athletics. He chose good music that we can sing. We actually sang hymns, and sang the parts.

T: You would sing it in four parts?

G: Yeah, in fact we had one that was eight.

T: You were a tenor?

G: No, I was a first bass.

A: The teachers joined the choir to make better sound. I sang first alto.

T: Was choir an elective or were you required to join?

G: You didn't get credit, no.

A: Some students didn't make it. We were all checked first to see if you had a voice that fit in.

T: So it was like auditions?

A: Yes. Choir was the most interesting thing about college. That's the part that I really enjoyed.

T: Were the classes pretty tough?

G: Oh yeah, Greek and Latin were tough. German I enjoyed. I would have liked to have taken more, but they didn't offer the course. I had two good years of German. Our teacher was Mrs. Freda Monich. She was born in Germany and spoke English very well – with an accent. She died during my second year, during Easter vacation. We helped carry her to her grave. There were six boys who stayed during Easter vacation. We had no place to go since we were 1500 miles from home.

T: How often would you go home? I suppose you only went home during Christmas?

G: Oh no, we'd go to somebody's home. They invited. They'd say, "bring so and so along." And we stayed there during the vacation.

A: We went home. I lived down in Iowa, so we'd go home each vacation – Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

Bethany has gone through many changes and Gig and Agnes have been there for most of it. It's impossible for me to enter my grandparents house without having hundreds of memories of working in the basement with my grandpa, or the smell of the food my grandma was cooking. Gig and Agnes Solli have a lot of offer, and I'm sure I only got a little bit of all their knowledge.

Ted Petersen
Religious Studies 220
April 27, 2000





Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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A Note from the Editor:

As I put this issue of **Oak Leaves** together, my family is in the midst of a household move. By the time you read this, we will have moved our residency from the hamlet of Norseland to the vast prairie (now cornfields) of "New Sweden" (the name of the township). This journey is a trek of exactly five miles north-westward.

Folks from our church (Norseland Lutheran) who have Swedish blood tell me it's okay for us to be in their neighborhood, since I myself have a little of that ethnicity running through my veins (I knew that would come in handy someday). From henceforth, you may reach me via snail mail at: **Robin Ouren; RR2 Box 122; Nicollet, MN 56074**. Phone and e-mail remain the same: 507-246-5309; heyrab@mnlic.net.

Oak Leaves is published periodically by the ELS Historical Society: 6 Browns Court; Mankato, MN 56001

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Oak Leaves welcomes articles of both synodical and local significance for publication. Articles may be edited for style, clarity, or length to allow for publication. Submitted manuscripts will be deposited in the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Membership

All membership
renewals due **June 1**

Voting Membership:

\$10/year: individual
\$15/year: husband &
wife

Associate Membership:

\$15/year: individual
\$25/year: institution.
\$5/year: student