

Betty Zier interviewed by **Tom Fryxell**

March 16, 1981

0:10 Interview with Betty Zier on President S.C. Eastvold. March 16, 1981, Tom Fryxell interviewer. I was wondering uh when did you first become acquainted with Dr. or President Eastvold?

0:23 I suppose it was the first time that we had chapel, he probably appeared there I imagine. I can't just put my finger on it. In fact I may have seen him at leadership training school the summer previous to starting but I can't place the first time I saw him, but I know he gave a real appearance of authority.

0:47 You know he was a big man physically big in stature very funny tall and broad-shouldered and just a very commanding look to him you know

0:58 What were your impressions of him?

1:00 Stern, I'd say. Though there was a, there seemed to be a kind of a feeling, a little feeling of human kindness or something, but I think the sternness over- was overweighting the other, overbearing the other.

1:24 Uh-huh yeah did he um did you ever get a chance to talk to him personally?

1:27 Oh yes, I would say I always felt like we were on friendly terms. When we talked together was he a person the students could come up and talk to and feel that he'd have their or they would have his attention he um he said that they were welcome anytime but it seemed like when they'd go to see him they would always come out of it feeling like whatever his opinion was was the one that would have to take precedence, it just seemed that way that his uh his opinion had to rule, was what came out on top always, you know.

That's what I would understand from others, I never as I recall it, I never had any appointment with him as such for any reason my former husband did. They kind of locked horns, but that was two strong personalities.

2:26 You know my husband was a student body president and he was trying to get some things started that they hadn't had and trying to circumvent some of the rules and regulations and got into trouble and almost got expelled.

The result of it, because it was going against the rules in these folks book anyway it was going against the rules

2:58 So your husband who was a student body president then locked horns with Dr. Eastvold, he was trying to get something accomplished then?

3:08 Yes, he was trying to bring about a little different social life on campus and it was really over the May Festival dances that they had the problem. They had folk dances at the time of the May Festival and these were considered by Eastvold as being too close to regular dances and he objected strenuously to them.

I don't really remember all the all of the circumstances now but I think that they were having them in the evening after the May Festival in the afternoon and Dr. Eastvold was supposed to be out of town. He came back and discovered that going on in the gym and that's when my husband was called in on the carpet for it.

3:55 Did he stop the dance right then and there?

3:58 I think so. See this happened, this actually happened after I was there. I had graduated in 48 and this was probably spring of 40 - no this would have been spring of 50, during his years of presidency of the student body. So there was something I wasn't on hand to hear all about it, but I heard about the confrontation afterwards you know.

4:20 This was bordering too much on what was forbidden, the dances on campus they weren't you know we didn't have that.

They didn't have smoking on campus. They weren't supposed to, I mean they weren't supposed to have smoking on campus I remember the day my freshman year that three girls in one dorm room were discovered smoking because we all knew about it because we could smell the smoke on the floor. They were discovered one time and they were really called on the carpet for that too because that was of course there was really a definite fire danger in it, it wasn't just the moral aspect of it, but the fire danger.

4:55 You probably saw in the recent Mooring Mast that they used to have 10 o'clock lights out and so many a candle was burned. Did you read about that?

Right we did that or we used flashlights to study because we weren't allowed out of the dorm after 10. Lights were turned out at 10, but of course studying didn't start till after you'd had your fun in the evening in each other's dorm rooms you know.

Then you wanted to start studying so you you ruined your eyes a little bit, but candles were common and and flashlights were common only beamed the flashlight away from the door so that the house mother wouldn't see the light in there you know she as she came down the hall you had to be sure that you were very careful once while she'd open the door and the lights would go out very quickly.

5:41 She would actually patrol the hall?

5:43 Oh yes she'd patrol the hall and be sure the lights were all out, everything was in order. It sure wasn't in order but she thought it was!

5:55 Little did she know. Why did they want lights out at 10 o'clock?

5:58 Well I suppose they were looking out for our health you know. They're trying to, but of course it wasn't being accomplished.

6:08 What dorm did you stay in?

6:10 Old Main. That was the only one where there were any students. Boys were on second floor, girls were on third floor and fourth floor and then eventually while I was there in 44 to 48 they reconditioned, I mean remodeled many of the rooms that was the time when they were redoing the rooms and so there was always carpentry going on.

But then they actually put in rooms on the fifth floor for the first - let's see now fourth floor

for the first time during the time that I was there. So that they were the brand new ones and much to be desired of course they were by rank of seniority the seniors would get first pick.

6:45 Oh sure. How big was the student body at that time?

6:47 When I started, when I began as a freshman in the fall of '44 there were 175 students and 32 of those were men and a number of those were you know off-campus people. I think there were let's say only 23 or so men that lived on campus, not all of them in Old Main. There was another building where some of them were staying. So they had a great time that way but that was a rare time because most of them were gone in service.

7:42 How are the economic conditions at that time?

7:46 Oh, struggling, for the school. They really were. I don't remember a time - well, I should take that back, I suppose. When the fellows started to come in on the GI Bill things certainly improved for the school too because of the influx of students. A number of the fellows had been at PLU and then were called up to service when they were in the middle of their sophomore year or something like that. Then they came back the first of them came back in the spring, uh second semester of, well it would have been '46.

8:19 The war ended in August of 45 and that was a little too close timing for them to get back and then too many of them were still overseas at the time that the war was over so the first bunch of them came and made their first impact in like early February of '46 then by the fall of '46 we really had a group by then.

I think our student body went up to 500 by that fall. So you see from 175 two years previous to 50 was just a fantastic increase in enrollment, over 100 percent you know more than that and so there were problems with dorms with dorm space they were sleeping at the first of 46-47 year they were sleeping some of the fellows in the basement of Trinity over here the old Trinity Church and then they finally got them into what they called government housing below the hill, just every place that they could put them in.

9:18 How did Dr. Eastvold get along with the GIs in terms of them obeying the regulations?

9:24 So there was a problem because you see they had just come out of a very regimented situation and they were ready for less regimentation and then to confront it in another degree in another level didn't set too well. It really as I recall I didn't hear about it directly from any of them but I remember hearing some rumblings about it. They surely didn't appreciate it such as the smoking and the dancing, that was just pretty blatant, the smoking and the drinking and so forth. There was a lot of it going on but the idea was not to get caught you know

10:01 What would they do if you were caught say smoking or drinking on campus?

10:09 You were campused.

10:11 What would happen there?

10:12 You weren't allowed off the campus for two weeks as I recall. That's what happened to the dorm girls that were caught smoking. They weren't allowed off for two weeks and had had to be in their rooms just definitely you know just very restricted that way.

10:30 What happened to the men when they were when they were caught smoking?

10:38 They were in dorms all over. I really don't know what they did. I suppose they were in

Eastvold's office.

10:45 Was anyone ever expelled over any of these infractions?

10:55 I can't see...I guess it's too far in the distant past now overall but it seems like it came pretty close if it didn't actually happen.

11:07 Overall how did the students get along with Eastvold? What was, say the general opinion of him?

11:15 I think it was pretty much avoidance as much as possible. He was sadly not regarded too well by very many. I'd say those that would stick up for him or speak well of him were really definitely the minority.

I know some of us felt like well after all he is the president of the university he has all these struggles and so forth I never felt ill will toward him but I felt sometimes as if if you expressed any of this you were definitely in the minority so you didn't say too much.

So the general opinion was maybe a little bit of resentment because of his sternness. You see a lot of the kids had come from backgrounds and high schools where they did participate in dances unlike myself where I wasn't allowed to. They were really missing this and you see if they enjoyed dancing enough then they would go off campus to the dances in the community and that was that was forbidden.

12:27 Oh it was? Even if they were of legal age?

12:29 I don't know if it was in any book or if we were told that or what but it was forbidden. But they would do it and actually then came the thinking over the years well if they're going to do it anyway why not do it in a supervised, better environment? And I suppose they have their talking points for that, you know.

12:49 Were there off-campus parties? I mean informal parties, "we'll all meet at so-and-so's?"

13:00 No, not sponsored by PLU. I suppose there were, I never was involved in any of them myself.

13:05 Do you remember anything about some minister's daughters who were caught drinking off campus? I understand there was a big uproar about that.

13:15 That's right, there was, yes. Yes I remember.

13:20 I think they were at a tavern or something and somebody from the administration or faculty saw them.

13:28 That rings a bell now I would never have remembered it but I remember something about it now.

13:34 Do you remember if they were expelled?

13:38 I don't really recall well as I say ... I just can't remember. There's something else I was going to say about something we were talking about a minute ago about the dances... it's gone now.

14:03 That's OK. What would they do for Homecoming? For the activities for Homecoming?

14:07 We'd have what they called mixers. Each weekend there would be on Friday night there would be a mixer and really it was challenging, especially for those who had been from dancing backgrounds, to figure out something different to do each time that would be fun,

you know just games and so forth that we would have in the old Gym. We still had it, before it burned down two years later.

14:32 Where was the old Gym located?

14:34 The old Gym was located where the University Center is now. I was still here on campus the night that it burned. Right after school let out in June of '46 we were here. The orchestra had played for the Normana Male Chorus downtown so we stayed a couple days after graduation.

That night the siren, you know the alarm, blew and we looked out and I thought sure the south end of Old Main was afire because the flames were so bright. And it was the flames showing over through the windows from the old Gym and it was just ablaze. It was just all in flames, probably from the chemicals in the basement because that's where the chemistry classes were held you know. It burned to the ground that night.

15:16 Did they ever find out the cause of it?

15:19 I think they just think it was a combination of chemicals with just you know internal spontaneous combustion or something like that. That's the last I heard but anyway then on that side they built a Student Union building and that's where we continued to have our mixers the other years.

15:35 What were the mixers?

15:36 Well they were just just games of various kinds. Contests, just anything that could be concocted for fun, things to do. Parlor games or a little bit more than that, you know. There would be small plays. Skits and that sort of thing. They weren't the official school plays, but there would be little skits and there'd be a lot of work towards it: posters put up, decorations made for the event, really put a lot into it, you know.

16:18 What would you suppose Eastvold's reasoning behind not having the dances was? How did he view the dances?

16:24 Well it was like hard playing and drinking and smoking, that they were they were immoral and he was from a very well I don't know... see this was sort of new to me because I came out of the American Lutheran Church and most of the kids here were from - those who were Lutheran - were from the Norwegian Lutheran Synod, later called Evangelical, and there were parts, different parts in that. And as I recall Eastvold was from the old Hauge Synod, which was a stricter one than the other even and so he was very dead-set again against any of these things. And for it to be a Christian college and to allow these things would have been the worst hypocrisy in his book.

17:16 Did he ever catch these dances in progress?

17:26 I don't know. Maybe some of these other people whose names I've given you can give you some information on that.

17:35 What was the social life like? Was there a lot of dating ?

17:40 Yes, there was. Especially after the guys came back, for certain there was a chance. You see before with 32 fellows among 175 students that weren't too many opportunities not the first year or so but there was always dating. I don't think you'd have PLU without dating.

17:58 What were the exciting things to do for a date?

18:01 Walk out to the kicking post. You heard about the kicking post, right? There's a picture of it in here somewhere, too. Someone's standing yawning by it waiting for someone to come.

18:13 I've heard about it, but I don't know where it was located

18:16 Well I don't know how to tell you either now with the buildings there it's hard to say. Kind of on the crest of the hill. I didn't know the names of the dorms exactly which one comes first, but I'd suppose behind the first dorm off to the left side of it. Behind Eastvold Chapel, that dorm over there beyond that, right over there somewhere.

At that time you see that was the woods out there, but just a path out there. See, the backyard of Old Main used to be where we'd have our baseball games, I mean our PE classes. It was just sort of a semi-rock field with a little grass growing around and then beyond that were the first trees and beyond that was the Kicking Post.

19:05 We'd spruce up the area on campus day in the spring, have it all cleaned up. Looking in the archives the other day I noticed that they would have conventions here in summer maybe they had some good unpaid labor to get things ready for the conventions. I didn't know they had campers come. I didn't realize this. We should have revolted, you know. We really should have all this free labor they were getting from it.

Now we would have mornings that we would work very hard cleaning up the grounds and then we would have our picnic and then we would have our tug of war across Clover Creek and then we could do anything we wanted the rest of the afternoon there were no classes. So that was a beautiful day. It was a class day that they took. They didn't even take a Saturday. Wasn't that nice of them?

19:51 Had Dr. Eastvold ever worked out on these workdays, or was he off some place?

19:56 I don't remember him working, no. But a lot of the faculty did. They were out there with us. Maybe he did, I don't remember. Though I don't remember ever seeing him except in his formal suit. I don't remember ever seeing him. He wouldn't get down on that level like Dr. Rieke would now. That was a different day.

20:20 What was he mainly seen doing on campus?

20:29 Appearing in chapel, speaking in chapel, dedicating buildings. We were dedicating one it seemed like every other month there for a while and we were all always involved in that. That was me.

20:45 What did he like to talk about at chapel?

20:48 He would always have a sermon but if there was something that was a problem at the time it would get into the sermon. You know the smoking, or the against the drinking, that would be that would be covered, and I'm afraid to say that many of the kids would make fun. Well today's the day Eastvold speaks you know, and then they'd say he's going to say such and so on. They would name some of the favorite phrases and invariably he would do them after a while.

You know the kids would start laughing, that's true of anyone, but they would pick on him when they wouldn't pick on anyone else. He didn't catch on what they were laughing about, you know. They would laugh, but then as I recall it we were having chapel over at Memorial Gym because wasn't there wasn't room enough in Trinity. The first year that I was here we

had chapel and we all fit in the old little Chapel that has been since torn down.

21:41 And then the second year we met over in Trinity because we were growing, you know. Then finally the third and fourth year down in Memorial Gym but it's down there that I recall the snickers and so forth but he didn't - I don't know if he even heard it. He was so wrapped up in what he was saying, that he had particular gestures when he'd speak and all and they would imitate but not not in front of him, but in the dorms you know there would be a lot of this going on.

22:13 What were his favorite phrases?

22:16 "The Lord will bless your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore," was one that he would always quote, would close with almost almost invariably ... and you'd think I would never forget!

22:45 Did he introduce the speakers at chapel if he wasn't speaking?

22:55 Yes, ut if he introduced them there was very little time left for the speaker. He often gave an introduction that could not... the poor speaker often had less time left to speak than Dr. Eastvold had taken introducing him! And that got to be a laugh, too, you know.

Or after he had introduced them and they had spoken if Dr. Eastvold felt that the subject hadn't been properly covered he would give his own talk afterwards, sometimes reversing what the speaker's opinions had been or said to get his word in on it. And that raised you know the fur on some people.

23:38 Did a speaker ever get into an argument with Dr. Eastvold you remember?

23:48 Not that I recall, but maybe afterwards. I don't know, I don't know. This was customary to recap the talk and enlarge on it or change it. So you see the strong personality that there was there.

24:05 What happened to people who publicly disagreed with him? Let me rephrase that did he tolerate people who publicly disagreed with him?

24:24 I suppose not. I suppose that there was quite an aloofness there afterwards.

24:32 I take it then it was very hard for the students to approach. We were talking earlier about it, you said that after conversation with him the students would come away feeling that they had just heard his opinion.

24:55 That's what I was given to understand by those that were there.

25:00 When you were talking to him uh what was your impression?

25:08 Well as I said he always seemed to be kindly towards me, I mean friendly towards me. My parents have given some money to refurbish one of the rooms and I don't - I always wondered if the friendliness was there for that reason but I shouldn't judge the man. I don't know.

25:35 What were some of the ways he raised funds for PLU?

25:37 He did a lot of that. He would be gone a lot of the time because he would be on trips to across state and even into other states to speak in churches and other places to raise money. He did a great deal for the university. He raised many, many, many funds for it and made a lot of calls out in the country going to farmers and convincing them of how how great Christian

education was and how needed it was and how much need there was here for funds and then he he was regarded as someone who could really get the funds whether people have them to give or not. Very persuasive.

26:27 He did a lot. I mean he kept it - when he came in '43 the year before I started as a student I guess the university was just about ready to fold economically it was just very very low and he really did pick it up by its boot straps. He really did bring it out like that. We all owe a real debt to him. He really fulfilled a need of the university.

26:55 Do you think if he hadn't come along the university would have been able to continue?

27:00 Depending on who else it had been I don't know. It was very doubtful as I understand it was really in dire straits and I know that the the first years that I was here the it was not uncommon for the faculty members to have a second job, such as working in the shipyards.

I know that after choir rehearsal Mr. Malmin would leave immediately to go down to the shipyards to work in the shipyards. He had a growing family and I know his income was not sufficient to care for the family and so he had the second job because the pay here wasn't enough to keep him going. And there were others in the faculty that did, too.

27:45 So when Eastvold came he had a positive effect on the university then?

27:47 He did have that, yes, that's right. I guess his strong personality was needed, you know just take hold the reins and not let go. I give him a lot of credit.

28:03 What do you think his greatest contribution to the university is?

28:11 I suppose really that, economically.

28:17 Getting the university on its feet?

28:20 I suppose you would say so. He was here, I don't remember what year...19 years.

28:34 Were there any great challenges to his authority by the faculty? How did he get along with the faculty as you saw it?

28:48 I really didn't see how that was I suppose we projected our feelings into their their situations and assumed that he ruled them with an iron hand, too. I really don't know the one who could tell you would be Toffee there because her dad was a faculty member under him. Or Professor Ramstad himself could tell you that. Or Miss B or Mrs. Knudson if you're able to reach them. Mrs. Knudson by the way is gone right now on a trip oh look she might be back. I know she'd like to talk to you.

29:31 Do you have any stories or examples that you remember of Dr. Eastvold that would really illustrate him? Any anecdotes?

29:56 He would be talking in chapel he would get so wrapped up in it and he'd shake his hand and he'd shake his head and his hair would fall on his face, one lock of it particularly. That was always a laughing matter too, you know.

30:16 What was his favorite thing to talk about in chapel? Something he was always coming back to?

30:24 Well, he would he would be speaking on money but of course we weren't quite the the audience that he wanted to reach. Well he would he would speak on on the virtues of PLU to

us. Pep talk, you know. He really believed in it, he really did. How else could it be that he did you know go out and raise funds for it?

30:54 Were you here when he resigned?

30:56 No, no, I wasn't here at all. See I was here his second, third, fourth years and you say he was here nineteen. So, no, I wasn't here at the end of it at all, it was very near the beginning.

30:54 How did the community regard him?

31:14 That I don't know either, I just I just don't know. I wasn't out in the community enough to know.

31:28 Let's see, I think that'll be it.

31:34 I was going to show you some of the things in here.