

Pacific Lutheran College Bulletin

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PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND TRUSTEES, 1894



Top row: Rev. E. Ballestad, T. C. Satra, Rev. T. Larsen, Rev. N. Christensen, Rev. B. Harstad. Middle row: Rev. Carlo A. Sperati, Prof. W. Shanon. Bottom row: Meyer Brandvig, Mrs. Carlo A. Sperati, Sophie Peterson.

The photograph from which the above cut was made is the property of Dr. and Mrs. Carlo A. Sperati of Decorah, Iowa, through whose courtesy Pacific Lutheran College is able to share it with the public. Dr. and Mrs. Sperati are still active in the service of the Church in connection with Luther College; all the others, with the exception of Rev. Ballestad (pastor emeritus), have gone to their eternal reward.

The two cuts in this issue of the BULLETIN are printed in illustration of Mr. N. N. Ronning's story, designed to arouse interest in the Golden Jubilee.

HOW A MAN FROM MARS BECAME INTERESTED IN PACIFIC LUTHERAN COLLEGE

By N. N. Ronning, Minneapolis, Minn.

What Did He Mean by Those Three Letters?

"I would like to have you spend some days at P. L. C. as a man from Mars and tell us of your impressions."

That sounds like Dr. O. A. Tingelstad. It was.

The letters P. L. C. might be some concoction of the New Deal, for all I knew.

When I learned that the letters stood for Pacific Lutheran College, and knowing that Dr. Tingelstad was its president, I knew it was a good school.

I had already gotten his number. I had heard him deliver a lecture which was exceptionally clear, logical, convincing.

We met several times in Minneapolis. No matter what we started to talk about, the conversation soon developed into a monologue about P. L. C.

Having attended a church school and being somewhat familiar with the past and present struggles of church schools, I could listen sympathetically. I was impressed by his grasp of the purpose and problems of church schools.

I came to Parkland, some eight miles from Tacoma, at night, in the latter part of May, 1940. Early next morning I got up to take my first look at Mt. Rainier, famed in song and saga. There was no mountain. Days passed and there was no mountain. I began to doubt if there was one. Then one day toward evening, Mrs. Tingelstad cried, "Now you can see it." I rushed out.

Yes, there it was! Right in front of me I beheld the majestic form of the snow-covered, crimson-colored Mt. Rainier towering against the evening sky in lonely grandeur.

An Inspiring Scene

One memory will long remain with me. I had the honor to face ninety-nine graduates of P. L. C., the august faculty, and a capacity audience of friends of the school. I studied carefully the faces of the graduates. Something so clean-cut and frank about them. As one by one came forward, in cap and gown, and received his or her diploma from the president, I breathed a prayer that these fine young men and women might go forth into the world, an honor to their Alma Mater, an honor to their God, and loyal followers of Him who said, "I am the truth."

Seldom do I look at a group of our young people without thinking of the many other young people who never had a chance. Every hand is against them except that of God, and Him they do not know.

Now I am out here again, this time to write something preparatory to the Fiftieth Anniversary of the College in 1944. Friends of the College speak of the anniversary as the Golden Jubilee with happy anticipation. They undoubtedly expect their dear school to be the recipient of generous gifts and are thrilled by brighter prospects.

I have spent some time studying the founding of the College fifty years ago. It is a gripping story.

Footsteps in an Empty Hall

As I pass through the empty halls of the Main Building toward the close of day, I notice that the floors and stairways are much worn but still in good shape. As I stop and think of the past years, I can hear the sound of many eager young feet and the murmur of happy voices, much laughing, much singing. At other times I can see shadowy figures of men and women who stood by the school in storm and stress, rain and sunshine, and without whose faith and sacrifices there would be no Pacific Lutheran College today.

Hundreds of young men and women have gone forth from these halls. No man can tell what the Christian training has meant to them, to church, and society. But this we know, and we thank God for it, that their work in different fields of human endeavor and their influence have been a power for good. The founders, the teachers, and the supporters made an investment that counts for time and eternity.

A Dream of Dreams

There is a saying that an institution is often but the shadow of some individual. In the case of P. L. C., Rev. Bjug Harstad is that individual.

Harstad is generally remembered as the doughty opponent of the Union of three Norwegian bodies in 1917. He will be remembered as time goes by as one of the greatest promoters of Christian education among the Lutherans in America. While a young pastor in North Dakota, he started three church schools. True, none of them now exists, but it reveals his interest in Christian education and his initiative and energy. He is the real founder of P. L. C.

He came to the West in November, 1890. The previous year the Norwegian Synod ministers of the Pacific District had petitioned the mother synod in the East for church aid to establish a school out West. Harstad at once seems to have taken the lead in the new venture. He wanted more than a small academy; he wanted a Lutheran University. So in December, 1890, shortly after his arrival on the West Coast, the Pacific Lutheran University Association was incorporated.

Believing in the power of the printed word, Harstad founded *Lutheran University Herald*, a "pedagogical, literary, and social" publication. The first issue was published in April, 1891; the last, December, 1894.

Most of the first issue was devoted to the University. The other issues contain mainly general reading matter of very high quality.

On the first page is a picture of a building that looks like an ancient castle. There is a note to the effect that this plan has been rejected. In a later issue is the picture of the present main building. In size and shape it would grace any university campus in the land. "This is only the first of three buildings to be erected in the future," we read.

That's the spirit of the West for you!

If Harstad's plans for building and financing his project were the product of a dreamer of dreams, his principles of Christian education were surprisingly broad-gauged, sound, and practical. As a graduate of Luther College and Concordia Seminary he was theologically conservative, scholastically thorough. Besides this, he was keenly conscious of what a higher institution of learning should stand for in the enterprising West.

A Noble Aim

"The school," he writes, "will train good Christians and good citizens. The great aim of the University is to give a thorough and practical instruction in a Christian spirit and on a confessional basis. If this is attained, this institution will be of great value to the Scandinavian people on the Coast and lift them to the place to which their rich and many-sided capacities entitle them. The school will undoubtedly contribute more than aught else to give the Scandinavians greater influence, not to mention political and social advantages."

It was Harstad's plan to have children enter in kindergarten and graduate from a real university.

Though the school was sponsored by the Pacific District of the Norwegian Synod, Harstad always addressed himself to the Scandinavians. But from the beginning his mind was open to suggestions to make the school an all-Lutheran institution. At the cornerstone laying, October 4, 1891, Rev. Hasseroth of the Missouri Synod, in his oration, in English, expressed the hope that Scandinavians and Germans need not travel to some distant state "but will be taught at our Pacific Lutheran University."

In the issue of the Herald for June, 1892, we read that Rev. Theiss, vice-president of the Pacific District of the Missouri Synod, visited the school. He could say that his church body would support the school and that he personally would work for it. In the January issue, 1894, we are told that Rev. W. P. Passavant, the younger, inspected the school. He said that the Lutherans were building too many small schools. They should secure teachers and money for a few large schools. Harstad adds: "In this Passavant is perhaps right. He said further, 'You must first and foremost make your school *Lutheran* and *American*, not *Norwegian*.' In this he is certainly right."

Are the dreams of old going to be a reality some day?

The announcement that the Lutheran University was going to be established met with enthusiastic approval by the Scandinavian and American press on the Coast and by leaders in the Norwegian Synod in the East.

How was the ambitious plan to be financed? Rev. Harstad could scarcely expect much financial support from the few and as yet feeble congregations in his own church body on the Coast. He makes no appeals to business interests. He expected strong support from the East, but he looked to the sale of lots in Parkland as his main source of revenue.

It seemed at first that he might succeed. Some day the complete story will be told. We shall not go into details about the long series of bitter disappointments. Harstad was never crushed. "We may be on the edge of a precipice, but we have not fallen down," the modern Viking said. In looking for new sources of income, he went to Alaska to dig for gold and later to Mexico to buy and sell land. Both ventures proved futile.

The dedication was announced to take place November 20, 1892. As a matter of fact, two years of heart-breaking disappointment and delays passed slowly by before the University was dedicated, October 14, 1894. It opened with 30 students, October 28, the same year, and with a considerable number of children. In 1898 the name was changed to Pacific Lutheran Academy and Business College.

If Harstad's plans were too big for his day, the plans of founders of many

other church schools were too small. Their efforts are forgotten, while his dream remained to disturb and challenge, till it now is being fulfilled.

In his Installation Address, President Tingelstad paid Rev. Harstad this impressive tribute:

"Forget not the vision and the courage and the toilsome trials and buffeting of the spirit of yonder pioneer pastor, Bjug Harstad, the builder, and his associates. Eighty years old next Monday those eyes, which have harbored many visions that the people should not perish!"

Tingelstad Comes

Having taken a glance at the early history of P. L. C., let us look at the development of the last few years.

With the coming of Dr. O. A. Tingelstad as president in 1928, a new era began to dawn. As graduate of Pacific Lutheran Academy, of Luther College, and of Luther Seminary, teacher for nineteen years at Luther College, and having received his Master's and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in education and psychology at the University of Chicago, he was well equipped for his new position.

His Installation Address, delivered December 14, 1928, was scholarly and eloquent. In face of what has taken and is taking place in the world today, this paragraph was prophetic:

"Often forgotten, because not recently enough fought for, is the truth, that religious freedom, liberty of conscience, is the basic form of American liberty. Superimpose hereon the Protestant high regard for the individual immortal soul, and you have the real and abiding foundation of American democracy. It is therefore no accident that American civilization is in some sense a Christian civilization, and neither is it an accident that nearly all these immigrant groups built and established Christian schools to help keep America Christian and to afford expression for Christian individualism, to make their peculiar gift to America."

Three Significant Developments

Three significant developments have taken place during the more recent years:

1. The growth in territory served by the College.
2. The endorsement given the College by the largest groups in the American Lutheran Conference.
3. The expansion and improvement of the various departments.

In 1918 the faculty and students of Pacific Lutheran Academy were transferred to Columbia Lutheran College, Everett, Washington, which school had been established by members of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church and began its work in 1909. In 1920 the Pacific Lutheran College Association was incorporated. By resolution of the Pacific District of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America the two schools were united at Parkland under the present name.

"Give due honor," said Dr. Tingelstad in his Installation Address, "to the founders and builders of that other half of the school, the half known as Columbia College, great among them the yet sturdy pioneer, pastor Rasmus Bogstad, like Harstad, builder of school upon school along the immigrant trail across the great Northwest."

In the fall of 1929 the work at Spokane College, Washington, was transferred to P. L. C., and this arrangement was made permanent by the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America.

In a very real sense P. L. C. is today's representative of the various Lutheran schools that operated for a longer or shorter time in the Pacific Northwest through efforts of synodical groups.

Of great significance is the endorsement of the College by the Augustana Synod and the American Lutheran Church in national conventions and by the more specific action of the Pacific districts of these church bodies in giving support to the College and in sending students to the College.

All these things, together with the rising tide of good will, have given P. L. C. a wider territory to serve and a momentum which will carry it forward to greater and greater usefulness in the high and holy cause to which it is committed.

Fifteen years ago the enrollment was 143, ten years ago 237, five years ago 302, last school year 523. This may represent the peak until enlarged facilities become available.

On June 18, 1940, the State Board of Education approved Pacific Lutheran College as a four-year teacher-training institution, said approval covering also the year 1939-1940. The Teacher Training Department has shown steady growth and the graduates are eagerly sought as teachers, having made and making exceptionally fine records.

The Board of Trustees of the College has authorized the addition of the third year's work in the Junior College of Liberal Arts for the coming year. It is the expectation to add a fourth year of Liberal Arts in 1942. P. L. C. will then have rounded its departments to fulfill the dreams of the founders in regard to a full-fledged senior college.

Other departments, as, for instance, art, biology, chemistry, physics, journalism and speech, political and social sciences, have been enlarged and improved. The forensic and dramatic efforts have brought gratifying results.

The music department commands the interest and service of the best musical talent in Greater Tacoma. Since music is included in the training of all teachers, its cultural influence permeates the whole school.

"The Choir of the West" has traveled extensively and won wide acclaim.

The College gives courses in physical education and health. Every student takes part in some activity. The general good health of the student body bears out the soundness of this program. Nearly all athletes have completed their full college course and have maintained a high scholastic average. They have won more than their share of championships in all sports. Last year P. L. C. had probably the most publicized small college football team in the United States.

The president and others are much concerned about the maintenance of a living connection between the College and the newly confirmed through the three-year senior high school division.

Something Different Emerging

Glancing at the names of the teachers is like reading a list of delegates to an international convention. One is struck by the spirit of cheerfulness and optimism among the cosmopolitan faculty members. One member, not of

The president must have practiced what he preached in his installation address:

"Openmindedness, fair-mindedness, tolerance, and a willingness to hear and a desire to understand, without questioning the right and duty to possess and defend individual convictions."

Such a frank and courageous view is bound to create and develop cooperation and loyalty.

If the faculty is cosmopolitan, the student body is scarcely less so. Though the students are mainly of Lutheran origin, other denominations are represented. P. L. C. is no longer an exponent of a certain tendency. Some students come from a pietistic atmosphere, others from a more conservative. No studied attempt is made to mold the students in the same form, but a conscious effort is made to instill a Christian philosophy of life. Not only that; a conscious effort is made to draw the students into a closer living fellowship with the loving, powerful personality of Jesus Christ and to give them opportunities to express their life and experiences as their home life and church life may prompt them.

This is aptly expressed in the words of Rev. M. Lono, the vice-president of the school: "A Christian civilization rests upon a Christian way of thinking. When the people generally no longer think as Christians think, Christian civilization is lost."

And by President Tingelstad:

"To promote and develop personal Christianity is the first responsibility of a Christian college or school. The Christian school is fundamentally a missionary agency. That is why it can appeal to the Church and its members for patronage."

In simple words I have given some of my impressions of P. L. C., a glimpse of the early history of the College and of the expansion in recent years.

When the proper time comes, others will tell of the needs of the institution.

A Pertinent Question

Has Pacific Lutheran College any special claims on the American Lutheran Conference in general and on the members of the Conference in the West in particular?

1. It is the only Lutheran College on the West Coast.
2. It has proven its right to exist by still existing and by expanding in spite of many unfavorable circumstances.
3. It is the only school endorsed by the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, the Augustana Synod, and the American Lutheran Church, all three. It is one of the most outstanding cooperative endeavors of the American Lutheran Conference.
4. P. L. C. has shown remarkable growth in recent years.
5. The various departments have been expanded and improved.
6. The College is enthusiastically praised by students, warmly approved by parents, and ranks very high among educational institutions for broad and thorough scholarship.

Teutonic extraction, said, "I have attended and taught at several schools, but have never witnessed a more phenomenal growth in attendance. Then, too, there is something here that is hard to define—one is drawn into a large family circle."

7. As an intellectual and spiritual lighthouse among so many unchurched people—only EIGHT per cent of the Lutherans in the West belong to Lutheran congregations—the College should appeal to all who believe that true and lasting democracy is possible only when inspired and guided by a Christian philosophy of life, and that Christian schools for our youth are one of the most effective means of making and keeping America Christian.
8. The Lutherans in the Midwest and the East need not be reminded that the Lutherans in the West came mainly from their homes and neighborhoods. Here an appallingly large number of them became more interested in material than in spiritual things and grew indifferent to the church which nurtured them in childhood and youth.

The West thus constitutes a large and hard Home Mission field which must not be ignored and forgotten. A well-equipped Lutheran college will strengthen the Lutheran church out West as hardly anything else.

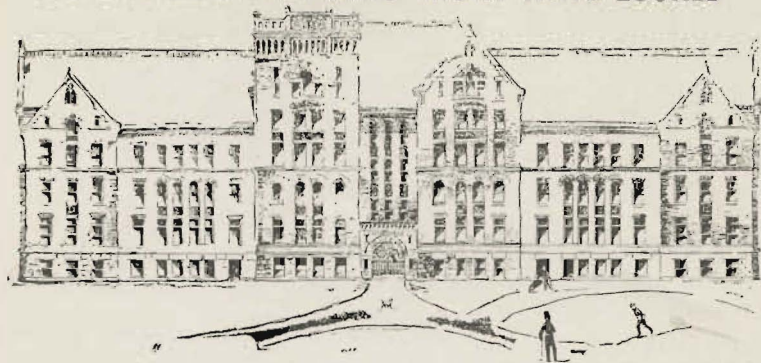
9. After all, Pacific Lutheran College belongs to the West. Here it has served the Lutherans and also others for nearly fifty years. Here it is appreciated by all who know it. Here it has received its main support. There were always some who did not have the heart to see it close its doors.

Neither must we forget the fine support given P. L. C. by high-minded business and professional people on the Coast regardless of church affiliations, as evidenced, for example, by the contributions to the library building made by residents of Tacoma and Pierce County.

The Lutherans on the West Coast naturally also look to the East for support of the College. That support may be slow in coming, but it will come. In the meantime it is up to the friends of the school in the West to make a united effort that it may turn great possibilities into splendid realities. Finally—let us not forget that at a time when Christ is being rejected by so many throughout the world, those of us who still believe in Him must rally as never before to the support of His cause.

Think on these things, and Pacific Lutheran College will be made still more fit and effective for the Master's use.

AS THE MAIN BUILDING MIGHT HAVE LOOKED



The University Building
*Architect's first sketch.—Reprinted from LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY
 HERALD, April, 1891.*