

LANGUAGE CHANGES -- AN ORAL HISTORY

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The study of church history can take on many forms. In taking on this project, we wanted to involve the elderly in reconstructing some aspect of church history. The general idea of having some seminarians interview the elderly about historical events in the church came from Mr. Wayne Baxmann, an administrator at Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service. Mr. Baxmann sees value in this type of project for both the elderly and the interviewer, and he feels that it would be worthwhile to think about doing more of this type of work with the elderly. "I really feel," said Baxmann in an interview, "that the project itself has a great deal of value for our residents because they realize that they are getting up in years and they feel that they are no longer significant; that they no longer have a contribution to make to anybody much less our church and our synod. The fact that we would give them an opportunity to share with us some of the things that they remember from their early years about the history and development of our church--some of our congregations, things that have occurred within our synod in the past that have never been written down--makes them feel like they are important, and indeed they are! They are still able to make a significant contribution. The fact that they are able to share with us things that would never appear in history books or essays presented to synodical conventions (makes them significant). By talking to them about some of the incidents which they have experienced from their past you would get an entirely different slant on things that, even if they were written down, the stuff that would be written down would be <sup>e</sup> purely factual in a journalistic style; whereas the types of things that you would be able to get from them are more human

interest. I really feel that, whether they would admit to this right now or not, they do feel that they are making a contribution. It makes them feel important to know that you would come to them and ask them for historical information, incidents that occurred that they are able to remember. A very important part of all this I believe is something that has occurred in this particular case where you got some valuable information from Clara Koehler, and since the time you obtained this information from her she has suffered a massive stroke and the Lord has taken her home. The information that you have been able to gather or glean from her, those are things that we will never ever have the privilege of hearing again until we are all in heaven. Obviously this has some significance to us and the future of the project if we should choose to continue this in other years." As you can see, Baxmann feels strongly that making use of the elderly has great value for all concerned. After becoming involved in this project we found that we feel the same way.

In picking the topic of language change, we felt we had a topic that people could relate to today. Many of our churches have changed from the King James Bible to the New International Version. The topic is also relevant as we contemplate changing to a new/revised hymnal.

Change is seldom easy. A change in one's religious tradition is even harder than most changes. To ask a Christian to use a different language to pray and sing praises to his God can cause much turmoil and conflict. The true teachings and doctrines of our church must never change, but the vehicle God's word travels in must go through some changes in order to make the message understandable. Foreign mission work would be very slow and often

unproductive if God's word and the missionaries words weren't translated into the foreign tongue. There are also times to consider language changes in our churches right here at home. It was to make our worship more meaningful that many WELS churches began using a more modern translation of the Bible such as the NIV. The same reason is behind our Wisconsin Synod deciding to develop a new/revised hymnal for use in our worship services.

But change is often difficult. The difficulties which occurred in the KJV to NIV change are still fresh in our minds, and the problems which a different hymnal will bring out are being anticipated. In the light of these changes it was thought that it might be interesting and educational to look back to other major efforts in our synod to accomplish language change. First of all, what were the changes that were made? Secondly, what were the reasons for changing languages when the churches did change? Thirdly, what methods were used for carrying out these major changes in the religious life of our people? Fourthly, what were the difficulties that arose in the church and among its people going through such changes? If we can get some answers to these questions, we might also gain some insights into how we might make our coming changes less troublesome. Someone once said that history doesn't repeat itself, the mistakes do. Hopefully we can learn not only from our past mistakes but also from past successes.

#### OUR PROCEDURE

When someone wants to find out what has happened in the past he has several options on how to proceed with his research. He could try to find books written on the subject, or he could read old newspapers or personal letters from the time he is targetting,

or he could try and find someone who was actually involved in what he wants to know. Most of the language changes in our synod occurred in this century so we would need to seek out people alive soon after this century began. Thankfully WLCFS was willing and excited about an oral history project. They could easily provide access to a good number of Wisconsin Synod members who had lived through those changes and who were very willing to share information with us.

Mr. Baxmann gave us the names of several people that he felt would be most helpful to us. He kindly introduced us to each of the ones he had selected. Then each of our walking historians were interviewed. A taperecorder was used to enable us to go over the material later and to have an accurate record of what they said. We did have a list of questions prepared before hand which we loosely followed. <sup>For the most part</sup> Our questions zeroed in ~~mostly~~ on language change. Any added information from the residents came mostly by way of volunteered sidelights. The interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to 90 minutes depending on how the residents were feeling and on how much information they were able to share with us.

INTRODUCTION OF INTERVIEWEES



August Bergin

August was born in Milwaukee in 1900. He was baptized at St. Matthews, 10th and Garfield, and he attended the Christian Day School there until he was 8 years old. He then became a member at Siloah and attended the grade school there through 8th grade. He was confirmed in 1914. He did not go on to high school. In 1923 he married a girl from Siloah. They were together until she died in 1975. August served as the secretary at Siloah for 30 years in a row and also served as a German elder(usher).



Frieda Domroehs

Frieda grew up in the Rib Lake area of Wisconsin. She is the oldest of five children. She later lived in Milwaukee and, prior to marriage, worked in the Kringles Children's Home. She was married at the age of 22 and then moved to Fondulac where her husband had grown up. Frieda had no children so when her husband died at age 53 she got a job and worked for 17 years. She then retired and moved to WLCFS. She and her husband belonged to St. Peters, Fondulac and she has been a member of Redeemer for the last 12 years.



Linda Guse

Linda grew up on Milwaukee's south side. She attended St. Peters while growing up and, for a while, after she was married, even though her husband was from St. Paul's Cudahy. Later she did join St. Paul's with her husband at the age of 29 because of travel difficulties. This was before the days of automobiles being so common. She was the mother of four children.



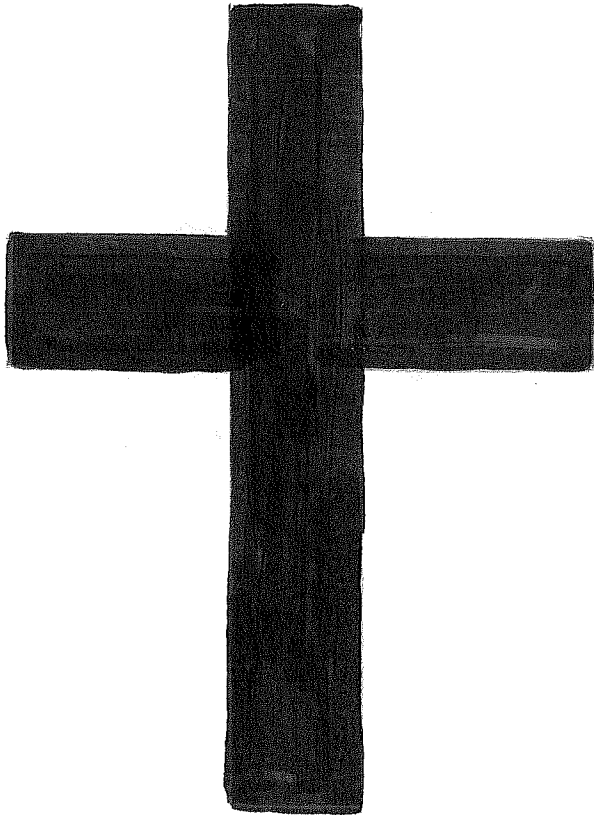
Dorothy Habeck

Dorothy was born in 1903 in Marinette, WI. She was the oldest child in her family. After grade school, instead of high school, she went to normal school to learn cooking and sewing. She also took a teacher's course there for two years. She went to night school studying business and worked in a business office for five years. She married Pastor Habeck in 1929. Prior to marriage she taught Christian Day School for two years at a LC-MS school in Forrestville, WI. While married to Pastor Habeck she lived in Minocqua for four years, Medford for seven years, Weyauwega 10 years, Milwaukee for 16 years while he was the pastor at Gloria Dei-Bethesda, and then at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon until Pastor Habeck's death in 1984.



Minna Huth

Minna was raised in the Milwaukee area and attended St. Johns, Wauwatosa. When she was a girl the professors at the seminary in Wauwatosa walked to church with her family. Minna married Pastor Huth about 1918. Pastor Huth served Messiah on Milwaukee's south side for 50 years. The Huth's had 4 children, two boys and two girls.



Clara was born at Stillwater, MN. When she was two years old her family moved to Janesville, MN and attended a Missouri Synod church until they moved to Sleepy Eye, MN when Clara was five. Clara was a member of St. Johns in Sleepy Eye until she was married. She lived in New Ulm for two years just before she was married, and after marriage in 1928, she and her husband lived in Redwing, MN. Clara taught public school in the country from 1917 to 1920. She was the youngest of six children in her family. She seemed drawn to churches with the name St. Johns. Besides St. Johns in Sleepy Eye, she also attended St. Johns in Redwing and in Wauwatosa. Clara moved to Wauwatosa, WI after her husband died. Shortly after we had the opportunity to interview her, she suffered a massive stroke and the Lord called her home this past April.





Alma Redel

Alma grew up in the Milwaukee area and attended St. Matthews on 8th and Chambers.



Marie Schoknecht

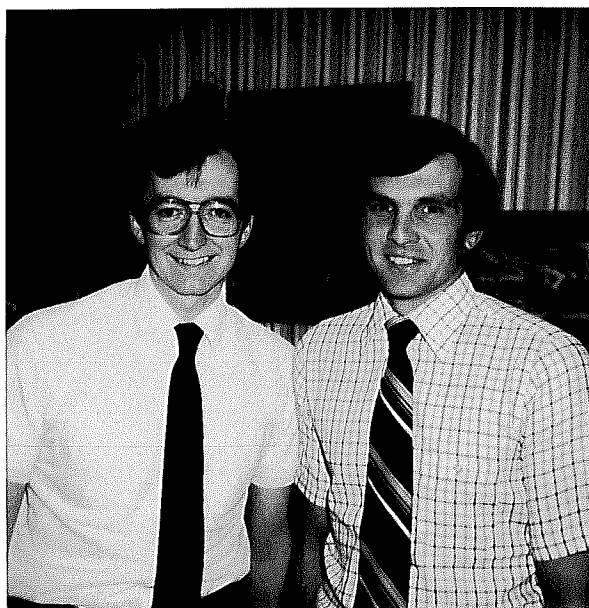
Marie was born in 1902 in Milwaukee and was baptized by Pastor Bading at St. Johns, Vilet St. She was confirmed by Henry Geishen Sr. at Jerusalem in 1914. She attended public school through 8th grade and then Riverside High School. She taught Christian Day School in Newburg for two years and then at Emmaus (LC-MS) until 1935. Then she substituted in WELS schools. She lived with her parents until 1964. She has been a WLCFS resident for 16 years.



Ella Wills

Ella grew up in Jefferson, WI. She was one of 12 children and had a twin sister. She attended Christian Day School and was confirmed in 1908. Then she attended public high school until 10th grade when she had her leg operated on and fell behind one year. Her parents felt it would be better for her to go to Northwestern at Watertown. While attending school there she also took a teaching course from a lady in town. She graduated in 1918. She went back to Jefferson to work in a lumber yard but wanted to teach school. She went back to school at Whitewater, graduated in 1924 with a teaching certificate, and taught public school in Fontana and Watertown for 15 years until she was married. She then moved to Milwaukee for 18 years until her husband died. A need developed for a teacher at St. Peters on the south side of Milwaukee and she was asked to

teach there for six months. She ended up teaching there for 15 years. All together she taught for 30 years.



Kerry  
Kronebusch

Gary  
Tryggestad

The Interviewers

RESULTS OF OUR RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC

The results one receives in an oral history project may at times be quite different than the facts and figures of most histories. Then again, sometimes we might even be suspect of the total truthfulness of some history text books. The results of our study are as accurate as the memories of our interviewees. Most information we received is long on thoughts and feelings and short on facts and dates. This is not necessarily bad but it needs to be taken into consideration from the start.

All nine of the interviewees attended a Lutheran church where only German was used during their early years. Six of the nine grew up in homes where only German was spoken. These six then learned English for the first time when they went to school. The other three already knew English before they went to school. Frieda Domroeh's home spoke German and English. They knew English well enough to subscribe to an English newspaper. There was no church school available so she attended public school, and <sup>then attended</sup> a confirmation on Saturday afternoons. The confirmation classes were in German and that made it very hard for some of the children who did not know German very well. The Bible class and church services were all in German.

Clara Koehler learned some English in her home before she went to school. When her ~~older~~ brother first went to school he wouldn't talk at all. They found out that it was because he only knew German and couldn't understand the English that was spoken. Her parents decided that being they were living in America they should now speak English. Thus Clara learned both German and English in the home. She also learned some French because her mother was French. When the parents didn't want the children to

*understand*  
what

was being said they would speak French. Clara went to parochial school and was confirmed in German. When she was young all the services were in German.

Marie Schoknecht also spoke both German and English in her home as she was growing up, so she had no problems understanding either language when she attended church and school.

So everyone in this group attended a totally German church when children. They all saw and lived through the changes from German to English. Not only did they see the changes from German services but also from German Bibles, hymnals, catechisms, Bible classes, and religion classes. We asked them to look back 50-60 years and talk about these changes.

If German was such an important part of the home and church life, what were the reasons that prompted the language change? August Bergin pointed to a very significant reason for change-- the important work of missions to the ever increasing English speaking population on the north side of Milwaukee. Siloah was built by about 60 German families who had a big concern for mission work. The new church drew people in from Cedarburg, Fondulac and from the south side <sup>of Milwaukee.</sup> Their new pastor, Pastor Birkholz, was able to translate into English and speak English quite well so this helped make the transition easier.

Frieda Domroehs noted that because they didn't have a German church school and most of the children knew only English, the eventual change to English was inevitable and it was favored by the people.

Dorothy Habeck remembered an interesting reason for the change at Marinette, WI. With the influx of more and more English speaking people there was intermarriage between German and English

speakers. Dorothy said that two of her uncles were among those who married English speaking girls. In order to allow them to worship together, English services were begun.

Minna Huth said that her husband (a pastor) didn't know German very well so he preached in English from the beginning. As more men with primarily an English background began studying for the ministry, we had more men who didn't have the capability to handle German. This was also pointed out by August Bergin. He said that when Pastor Voss was at Siloah for a while, a number of people were asking when Pastor Voss was going to preach at the German service. When Mr. Bergin talked to Pastor Voss about it he said that he didn't know German that well. August then asked him if he could just read the German and Pastor Voss said that he could. In this case it worked out well because the people were pleased, and he learned to do it well enough to completely take over the service full time when Pastor Birkholtz had a heart attack. Other pastors reading of the German didn't seem to work out as well. Clara Koehler recalled that when she was at Redwing they had a German service once a month. Some members in Redwing were driving to Lake City to attend more German services, and when a new pastor came to Redwing, this group wanted to bring back the German service. The new seminary graduate didn't know German very well so he tried to read the first sermon in German. After the service he asked Clara how he did. She replied, "Not too well, you did a good job reading though." She didn't want to encourage him for she resented the fact <sup>that</sup> he read the sermon rather than preached it. So she started going to English services because it wasn't satisfying for her to go to this pastor's German services.

Alma Redel commented that they might as well "go along with the crowd" and change to English. She also added that they had to speak English during the war (WWI). On this point August Bergin thought that WWII didn't have an affect on German services but it did affect the workers in the factories. No German could be spoken there at all. WWI also affected Marie Schoknecht's desire to be a German teacher in the public schools. It seems even some public schools had one class a day in the German language. The war against Germany quickly brought that to an end. She thought the war also had an affect on bringing to an end the use of German in the church.

The basic reasons then for the change of languages according to these individuals were as follows: 1) more and more people were comfortable with or only knew English, 2) fewer and fewer pastors were capable of preaching well in German, 3) distrust of a strong German heritage during the wars, 4) a need to do mission work to non-German speaking people and 5) intermarriage.

The third area we wanted information on was the methods used to carry out the language change. August Bergin pointed out that it was important to have a minister who could preach and work with both languages so that both groups<sup>5</sup> could be ministered to. This allowed for a more gradual change rather than an abrupt change.

A method of change mentioned by Dorothy Habeck was also mentioned by others we interviewed and seemed to be widely used in our churches. They started out having English only one or two times a month. This allowed for a gradual integration with English speaking people, but the integration was very slow. Frieda Domroehs said when Rib Lake got its own full time pastor they alternated German and English weeks for services. Ella Wills recounted

that they held German and English services every Sunday. This meant that the pastor learned the sermon in both languages. The German service had fewer and fewer attending so they finally decided to drop it. The change at Siloah was somewhat more abrupt. August Bergin recalls that both English and German services were held every week as soon as their new church was built in 1925.

The change of hymnals would of course be going on at the same time. Many hymns and melodies were repeated in the English to help that transition. In the schools the major change was in the religion classes. Ella Wills remembers that they read their Bible history stories in both English and German. Her catechism had all the pages in both German and English to help in making the transition. Ella was so interested in the change to English that she came back after school in ninth grade (after she had been confirmed) so she would know the catechism also in English.

The method used in most of these churches seemed to be a gradual integration allowing the German services to die out on their own and putting in more English services. The change in the classroom was also gradual, sometimes using both languages at the same time.

The last of our four areas of concern deals with the difficulties that arose in the church and among its people who were going through these changes. That there would be difficulties is not surprising. For a long time the attitude of our pastors and professors was that German, only German, should be used in church and in religion classes. An example of this is given by Minna Huth. One time in church she was speaking in English and a professor from the seminary came up to her and said (in German), "Can't you speak German?" She replied, "Well, what's the differ-

ence of a language. There are a lot of languages in the world. Other people must understand some of them so what's the difference. Just so we get the news and understand what we should understand." Obviously, there was some disagreement. In our interviews we heard some of the concerns of the people as they contemplated the language change. Some of the people were worried about losing doctrine in the change of languages as Marie Schoknecht pointed out. But she added that some people were just stubborn and wouldn't do it (change from German). Almost all the people attending the German service could have gone to the English.

Marie didn't remember very much resistance to change only that many people (including herself) liked the German better. She thinks it is hard to translate and get the real meaning and feeling of the original. To this very day she is more at home in the German hymnal than the English. She can remember the numbers of the hymns in the German hymnal but can't remember the English numbers. Marie also can still recite many verses of her favorite German hymns, and even if she knows the English translation it is not as meaningful for her. She still has and uses her German Bible and hymnal. In the Lenten season she reads the six passion lessons from the German hymnal and gets more out of it (even though the print is getting a little fine now). Marie uses German in speaking today but she has to be careful because some of her friends she plays scrabble with don't know German. Dorothy Habeck expressed some of the same feelings. She still prays in German and is more comfortable in the German language. Ella wills agreed that in German the word of God goes much deeper. The English seems superficial. She felt the same way about the hymns.



Ella recalls that the change in preaching from German to English caused "quite a riot in church." Some of the people got so angry and were so against the English that they left the church. She thought the change from the German to the KJV didn't cause any real problems for her. Concerning people's problems with the KJV she said, "I can't understand why they can't understand. The NIV sounds trashy.... Now when they have Bible class and she reads her KJV, someone will say, 'Well that ain't what my book says.'" Ella is not real thrilled about the idea of a new hymnal coming out. "I think that conditions in the country and with the hard times the churches are having, I think it's a very poor time to destroy these beautiful hymnals and hymns." Although she did like the idea that her present church sent out a list and asked her to check to see if her favorite hymns were on it.

Dorothy Habeck knew there was opposition to changing from German to English, specific objections, but she doesn't know what they were. Clara Koehler wasn't real happy with the changes but she said she "wasn't very far sighted because now everybody can speak English." August Bergin, who was church secretary for 30 years and was aware of what was going on said that he didn't remember any problems. The opposite of that was remembered by Marie Schoknecht. She said that a couple of families couldn't speak English (or didn't want to) so they left and formed St. Michaels.

The viewpoints on difficulties caused by the language changes varied greatly throughout this group. It varied from no problems (none remembered at least) to "a riot" of problems which led some people to leave the church. The surprising thing to us is that we expected many and great difficulties. We thought problems

would be widespread with many specific examples which would be easily recalled. This was not the case at all. Either the change in most cases was made slowly with a good educational program before hand or time heals most wounds and washes away problems that at the time seemed serious but really didn't disrupt their worship life in a lasting manner. It should be noted that eight of the nine interviewees were women. This means they weren't personally involved in any church meetings where problems might have been discussed. They would only know about problems from how they felt and from any complaints they had heard from others. The one man we interviewed didn't recall any problems at Siloah and he was directly involved in church business as secretary for many years. One man however, does not make for a very good representative sample. Taking into consideration all that we heard from our interviewees, it does seem like the problems were relatively minor. Hopefully we can continue our change to a more modern version of the Bible and carry out our hymnal change so that years down the line our people will remember very few problems. Hopefully they will remember that the problems that did arise were handled properly and had few lasting adverse effects.

#### PROBLEMS, DIFFICULTIES AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF ORAL INTERVIEWING

As we worked through this project we felt more and more that it was a worthwhile project. Making use of the elderly in an oral history project has its benefits for both the elderly and those who interview them. We think it would be a good idea for others in future years to do a similar project. With that in mind we thought it might be helpful if we would include a section listing some of the problems and difficulties we encountered as well as some of the side benefits and rewards. Our listing

of these difficulties and benefits follows.

Problems and difficulties:

- Some of the elderly have difficulty remembering.
- They can visualize in their mind but not verbalize.
- Exact dates and order of events is hard to remember.
- When discussing one point something else can pop into their minds and they don't necessarily let the interviewer know they have changed gears.
- Accuracy is sometimes in question because one thing seems to contradict another.
- It can be difficult to decide what is personal or private and not appropriate for printing.
- You may run into problems with people not feeling up to an interview on a particular day.
- Processing of information can be difficult and time consuming.
- In order to make your information more accessible it is important to listen to the tapes and write down the pertinent information. This is a time consuming process.
- People may not know much about what you need information on, but they may have a lot of interesting stories (a lot of information but not useful information).
- Many are ladies who may not know that much about what was happening because they weren't involved in church decisions and voting and their husbands didn't share the information with them.
- Sometimes they might have so much information that it is hard to process all of it.
- The interviewer needs to look out for "leading the witness".
- Sometimes they say things that are doctrinally wrong and you don't know if it is your place to say anything.
- Listening to tapes makes you realize that there are questions you still need to ask. You therefore need followup.
- With some who are less talkative you need to keep going with your questions. You may then be thinking too much about what you should ask to keep them going and poor listening results.
- Some may repeat themselves alot. This can also be a positive thing because you can be more sure that what they are saying is accurate.
- Not knowing German can be a drawback depending on the topic and the person being interviewed.
- It is difficult to balance wanting a spontaneous interview with wanting to stick to an outline or set of questions that you want to ask. However, having some kind of question format does seem essential.

Benefits and rewards:

- Most of those you interview are very interesting people with interesting stories.
- There is a spiritual sharing between generations.

- Appreciation for history grows, it comes mor@alive.
- Things you learn in class start coming alive and making more sense as you relate what you've studied to what the people say. It's interesting to talk to people who actually met and knew some of the big names like Bading and Brenner. Also it is interesting to hear them talk about some of the ancestors and relatives of people who are at the seminary now.
- Pastor's wives can give us useful and practical information on what it is like for a wife and family in a parsonage.
- This type of project helps develop an ability to relate and listen to older people and to realize that they have something of value to contribute even though memory is no longer 100% of what it used to be.
- You may see how it is for someone to be able to remember minute details from the past but not remember present things at all.
- This type of project can show us the value of keeping track of information in our lives (maybe in a diary) because future generations may find them of some interest or of some use.
- You grow to see these old people as real people who are enjoyable to be with and who can quickly find a warm spot in your heart.
- You can see how richly the Lord has showered his blessings on them in their lives. This gives us more reason to thank and praise our God.
- You can gain interesting insights into education in their times (e.g. you can see how teachers became teachers).
- You can learn things that have been done with elderly people that have been appreciated (e.g. Zabaath wanted feedback from its elderly on their favorite hymns for use in the new hymnal).
- You can see how difficult it is for elderly people to move from home to nursing homes(e.g. Ella Wills said, "I wish a million times I would have stayed in my home....You have no idea what it means to give up everything you have and walk out with just a few clothes....I feel so sorry for some of these people that come here and they cry and cry and they want to go home and they want to go home.").
- It is a joy to go back and visit again because they are so happy to see you. It is very rewarding.
- Some may soon pass away and you may be able to hear some of their last remembrances and recountings of God's blessings in their lives(e.g. Clara Koehler).

We hope that this listing will be of some help to future students who would like to give a project like this a try.

### INTERESTING STORIES

No oral history would be complete without some personal interest stories and quotes. Some stories can be written down and still retain their flavor. Others lose much when the voice and mannerisms of the story teller are lost. Below are some of those stories which touched our hearts and that we thought would be worth sharing.

Intermarriage between Lutherans and other denominations was common in the early years of this century just as it is today. Ella Wills said that when her husband, a Catholic, came as a suitor, she told him she wouldn't marry outside her church. He said he would change religions after their marriage. She replied, "No sir! I don't buy a cat in a bag." He changed. He went to instruction classes one night a week for several weeks and she went with him. Ella told her neices this story but most wouldn't listen. One of them however, did listen. She asked her fiance to go to church with her. He did go with her to church. At the wedding Ella's niece thanked her for the advice. She said Ella's help just made her wedding. Now the husband is a good church worker. Oh that more of our Lutheran young people would heed Ella's advice.

Ella was one of several teachers in this group (also Dorothy Habeck, Clara Koehler and Marie Schoknecht). Ella believed in strong, strict discipline. She saw a great difference between the public and parochial schools. At a Lutheran school you could bring religion into all the subjects and also into discipline. At St. Peters they wouldn't allow attendance unless the parents signed a statement saying they could use corporal punishment. The public school students who transferred were almost impossible to handle. They would run up the fire escape and stay up there on the roof.

She would discipline them with this idea in mind: what will this person be like in 20 years? Ella was also firm in sticking to the basics when she was teaching. One mother came in and demanded that her daughter not be forced to memorize her multiplication tables. The mother said that there was no need because of computers. Ella insisted that the girl learn them just like the rest. Three months later it turned out that the mother was accused of embezzeling \$16,000 (she was a bookkeeper).

Ella also told a story about how she handled things in her home. She and her husband took in her sister-in-law's three boys after she had died. Ella said, "Nobody wanted them. They were running around like ragged muffins. These boys grew up to be fine young men. But boy, you have to be pretty hard sometimes." The third child wanted a paper route. She said o.k. He also wanted a bike so they got him one. Then he left his bike behind a car and it was run over and wrecked. The man who ran over it was from the paper station. The boy really got mad and wasn't going to deliver his papers anymore. Ella told him, "Oh yes you are! That isn't going to give you a chance to quit your job." The boy had also been spending too much, buying things for his bicycle. He had gotten himself into debt, borrowing on the money that was supposed to go toward paying for his newspapers. Ella refused to bail him out. She took over his finances until he had gotten himself back in the black. She wanted to teach him to be more responsible. Now he is a full commander in the navy. He wrote back to Ella and thanked her for teaching him all she did.

It is interesting to note that Ella's roommate at WLCFS now is Minna Huth. Minna didn't go to parochial school because of the corporal punishment. She pleaded with her parents not to

send her to the parochial school because "they spanked the children when they were naughty and I don't like that." When she did something wrong at church or at home she would have to go and sit all alone on a chair facing the wall and say to herself, "I shouldn't have said that, I shouldn't have done that, and I won't do it again." Minna also believes in discipline but not corporal punishment as a form of discipline. "I never spanked," she said. "The body is precious. Look how long it is forming and coming out. Nine months! We were very careful of the body. We think the Lord formed it."

Linda Guse remembered many things from her years of growing up. She said that she didn't go to the Christian Day School at St. Perers because her mother couldn't afford the 50¢ per week. Even after the pastor said they could attend free of charge her mother refused. The reason for that was that when her mother was little the other students made fun of the "kids who had pa's who didn't pay." Linda's mother didn't want her children to go through that kind of ridicule.

Linda could remember so many things. She remembered "little faces of angels" painted on the ceiling at St. Peters. She remembered (in great detail) a day when the pastor got upset with two of her girl-friends for talking in church. She also told a story about when her brother was teaching her to drive. The car had a shifter and she kept stripping the gears. Her brother hollered at her so she got out and said, "Take your old car." After that she never did learn how to drive.

Marie Schoknecht fondly remembers the days when she was teaching in a one room school. In that situation she had to be "teacher, fireman and janitor." She had one boy who, instead of saying

"Kyrie eleison", he said, "Kitty has lice on." She couldn't get angry with him because he was her good wood chopper. She also recalled teaching in another school when she had 50 second and third graders in her class.

Frieda Domroehs could remember that when she was a girl her church in Rib Lake shared a pastor with the church in Medford. The pastor lived in Medford but he would come to Rib Lake on Saturdays and stay over night at her house so that he could preach at her church on Sunday morning. Her father would then take the pastor back to Medford in a buggy or sleigh. She remembered having six horses and a very pretty sleigh.

Clara Koehler was just full of stories and information. She was very active throughout her life and enjoyed a wide variety of experiences. She told about her grandfather being a cooper (barrel maker) in Germany and how her father also took up that trade when the family moved to Minnesota. She told how her father supported the family (brothers and sisters) after his father died. She told about her uncles who were among the early graduates of the Wauwatosa Seminary. One of her uncles, Richard Seigler, went on a stewardship drive throughout the synod and visited every church and many member homes. She remembered that the synod was \$25,000 in debt and after his visits she attended a mortgage burning at New Ulm.

Clara told us about a time when she was a girl and her father asked a widow in town to come and live with them. The widow didn't have any other family. Clara said when her father offered, the widow "asked how much it would cost. He said it wouldn't cost anything, only that the children would have to answer her in German." Before this time Clara's parents had decided that the



family was going to speak in English if they were going to be living in America. Now her father thought that they should also remember how to speak German too. Clara could remember "standing in front of 'Grandma Miller' and asking questions and she wouldn't answer because they were speaking poorly."

Clara also told us about her four years of teaching before she was married and about the bookstore in Redwing that she and her husband owned and ran after she was married. She also remembered many church affairs and told about things like how uneasy she felt at the time the LC-MS and the WELS split. She just had a hard time understanding and even accepting the fact that the LC-MS had parted from sound doctrine. "That can't be," she said, "but it did happen." As Clara remembered the years she was growing up she talked about how close her family was to the Lord and how important church was to them. It was a very warm feeling she conveyed as she remembered the many incidents from her past.

Dorothy Habeck had many stories to tell. Among these stories are many about her life together with Professor Habeck. We will just note a couple of her stories. She recalled one time when she was young she had gone to the court house to get a work permit. In the court room there was a land dispute going on. The people arguing were speaking German and she found out neither party knew English. She also found out that no one else in the court room knew German so nobody could understand what they were saying. Dorothy was the only one there who knew both. She was quite young and nervous but still she went into the room. She served as an interpreter and the case was settled.

Mrs. Habeck recalled many things about her life--a life that was blessed with much variety. She attended a number of

different schools--normal school, night school, college. She worked in a business office for five years, taught a class at "Wisconsin" and taught seven grades in Door County, WI for three years. After she was married and living in Milwaukee she served as a substitute teacher. She also remembered many of her experiences while married to Professor Habeck. She expressed the great joy she found in serving the Lord with her husband for so many years. They had hoped the Lord would take both of them at the same time but the Lord had different ideas. She marveled at how the Lord had helped her throughout her life and especially now with Professor Habeck gone. She is now enjoying life in the nursing home yet she looks forward to the next life with her Lord. She is still always smiling.

All of our interviewees gave us something to think about and many of the stories they shared touched our hearts and helped us to see that church history really is about real people. Taking on this project in oral history certainly was well worth the time we spent.