

FG: Rev. Frank Gray
CG: Mrs. Gray
MW: Maxine Williams

HISTORY OF NORTHWEST COLLEGE OF AG

Interview with Rev. Dr. Frank Gray,
July 20, 1965

FG: The school started very small, with only eighteen, and no housing facilities for students. They were either living at their homes in Seattle, or stayed in homes in the city, until buildings near the school were purchased and converted into temporary dormitories.

MW: Your son said, "The students did almost everything." Would you know anything about that?

FG: Well, they did. One student would be placed in supervision of that dormitory. He (Paul Gray) had supervision of the boys' dormitory.

MW: And he directed the orchestra. I think he did a lot of things!

FG: Some of those details I wouldn't know.

MW: Now what responsibilities did the District take? You said that financially they didn't and that they were the Board of Directors. Did they plan to do anything if the school didn't go financially? Did they plan to take any obligation for debts?

FG: Nobody had that in mind.

MW: Then money was one of the least considerations, I take it.

FG: That's right.

CG: A number of the women students worked in homes and got their expenses that way. The boys worked part time. The American Can Company was a real friend to the Bible students, through the years. And then later, when they had the dormitories they all helped. They had one lady who was house mother and took the responsibility and they (students) all had their chores. Churches from outside the area and parents brought canned goods and meat and vegetables and everything into the dormitories.

MW: Who planned the menus then? Did they just use whatever was on hand?

CG: They would supplement that with what they bought. They would use what was brought in and add to that with purchases. And the house mother was with them on that.

FG: The choosing of faculty was largely the result of recommendations by Rev. Ness with the approval of the Presbytery.

MW: Did you have any kind of standard as a basis? You had no academic standard?

FG: We had no academic standard.

MW: It would be more character? Whether a person had been efficient as a minister?

FG: Well, we thought somebody who was adapted to this situation.

MW: Did you try to choose a teaching pastor? Or did you simply let him (Ness) decide who would be helpful and approve them?

- FG: Well, usually he made ~~the~~ recommendations and the Presbytery approved them. But he did get the Presbytery approval almost every step that he took. He was very persistent about that.
- MW: Were there any other responsibilities that the District took?
- FG: As far as I know there was no one on the District Presbytery that had had any experience in school administration. Rev. Ness had had connection with the school in Minneapolis, so he was in a better position.
- MW: He didn't really teach in Minneapolis, though; he was only on the board.
- FG: I don't know.
- MW: I think so. He was pastor up at Brainard.
- FG: But he was connected with the school and very closely associated with Bro. Lindquist.
- MW: Well, actually, in those days, you didn't think of the school as having to be academic. This wasn't your point of view, your philosophy. Your idea of a school was to be spiritual, and to learn to know God, and to learn to know the Word of God. For this you didn't have to have schooling; you needed to know God. Isn't that the philosophy?
- CG: Yes.
- FG: I think idea of the Presbytery in connection with the school was to make the best possible Christian workers out of the students, rather than their academic achievements.
- MW: In other words, they didn't approach the school with academic ideas?
- FG: No.
- MW: Anybody who wanted to come, who loved the Lord -- this was the important thing -- to **love** the Lord, to want to know the Word better. If you could get good grades, fine; if you couldn't get good grades, fine. The ministers weren't going to be chosen on the basis of whether they had academic qualifications; they were going to be chosen on the basis of spiritual qualifications.
- FG: That's right.
- MW: If I understand correctly, this is the philosophy that lay back of the fact that if classes were dismissed for prayer, that you were ahead. It is not an academic philosophy, in other words.
- FG: That's right. That was in the beginning; that was entirely dominant in the beginning.
- MW: Did Brother Ness himself teach?
- FG: Yes, yes he did.
- MW: I can get the faculty members of that time from other sources.

FG: I should mention Bro. Beatty in connection with this because Bro. Beatty came very soon after Bro. Ness came.

MW: Now, he had had school experience. He had worked in the school in Minneapolis.

FG: He had had school experience. He was made Dean of the school.

MW: He couldn't have had too much experience in his background because North Central itself only started a year or two before this school did.

FG: Bro. C. C. Beatty was a very valuable asset to the school. He had a personality that lent a great deal of interest and inspiration and encouragement to the students.

MW: He is known as "Grace". He was somewhat of a buffer between Bro. Ness and the students?

FG: That's true.

MW: The students of that time constantly refer to them as Law and Grace. But I am really concerned here with the District and the responsibility that the District took. I would say from what I've heard that the District acted as the Directors and yet at the same time really assumed

FG: No financial responsibility whatsoever. That's right.

MW: They were in control, but took no responsibility. Is that the idea?

FG: The word "control" is a pretty strong word.

MW: They "directed"? You mean to say that although technically they directed, that actually they let Bro. Ness do it then?

FG: Well, he brought everything to them for their approval. And he usually got it. Sometimes there were some modifications.

CG: Bro. Ness was very careful to move in good direction. He was so sincere.

FG: He was very careful in taking it to the Presbytery.

MW: Do you know anything about the history of the school at the time it became a Seminary? What lay back of it becoming Northwest Bible Institute and Seminary? Was it because of the veterans?

FG: Well, that was at Bro. Ness' suggestion. I do not know the reasons. I don't recall them now.

MW: What was the reaction of the constituency to changing it to "Seminary"?

FG: Very little. Very little.

MW: Do you think this was because they had changed their philosophy toward education or because they had confidence that Bro. Ness knew what he was doing?

FG: To tell you the truth, I think it was lack of interest in that particular factor. It made so little difference what the name was.

MW: The reason I'm interested is that I have lived through two name changes and both times we had a little jar.

- FG: Well, there would be with a few individuals but the Presbytery as a whole, I think were not affected by it at all.
- MW: Then you as the District Superintendent didn't have problems in reconciling the brethren, the leaders, the ministers to this?
- FG: No, there were no strong objections.
- MW: Could I ask you this: Over the years, as you were superintendent, did you observe any change of attitude toward education itself?
- FG: Oh, yes.
- MW: Would you want to make any comment about that?
- FG: Well, I think as the students were graduated and entered into the ministry, they began to see the value of it then. And after all, I think that is the dominant factor in the development and progress of the school, the product--what it turns out.
- MW: Would you have any comment in regard to the leadership of Bro. Ness as a person?
- FG: Well, he had a very dynamic personality, and he was inclined to not take credit to himself for his accomplishments or for the success of the school. He tried to share it with others. And, while he had decisions in his own mind, he didn't try to implement them until he had first gotten approval, from the presbytery.
- MW: Apparently, he had a great ability to get others to do things. I've heard the students mention this.
- FG: That he did.
- MW: Would you care to comment on his ability as a leader of men; Getting others to work with him, and for him.
- FG: Well, he was very influential along the line of leadership.
- MW: Do you think they did it because he actually led them and they wanted to, and it wasn't a matter of coercion?
- FG: No, I think he inspired in them the desire to do it, rather than coercion.
- CG: His enthusiasm was great.
- MW: I heard Mrs. Davis say that when he got up to lead a song service, one just wanted to sing. Apparently he was a man who was able not only to do things himself, but he was able to inspire others.
- FG: That's right.
- CG: He was a strong disciplinarian in the school. Brother Beatty would be the one who would help the students react to it. And he was enthusiastic and he stood for his students; though they had been disciplined, he stood up for them. And he provided interesting things for them.
- MW: What sorts of things do you mean?

- CG: Well, all the activities planned: the chapel services, and they brought in outside speakers; and yet there was an enthusiasm that he had that the students got from him, too. Now some of them, the earlier students, profited by his enthusiasm. They would almost -- almost --, well, not mimic, but take after his mannerisms and all, and you could almost say, "He's been to Bible School" because of his mannerisms. He was very outstanding that way. He seemed to be able not only to get the students to
- MW: He seemed not only to be able to get the students to cooperate, but other people. Now if I understand correctly, even these students who worked, on Friday afternoons-- well, Friday afternoon belonged to the school, and it didn't matter whether they had a job or not.
- CG: Yes.
- MW: He must have been able to persuade these employers. I don't think we could do this at the present time.
- CG: He seemed to have a way to get people to cooperate. For the American Can Co. they had the afternoon shift, apparently, but
- MW: I read somewhere that on Friday everybody had an assignment. Apparently they stayed and had missionary activity on Friday afternoon and Friday lunch, and went out to different stations on Friday nights.
- FG: Yes, Friday night was a visiting night.
- MW: Apparently they could just stay with it all Friday. How they did this, I don't know.
- CG: Bro. Ness was enthusiastic and he was jovial. He had a sense of humor and he could joke with the students. The teachers responded to it, too. Their banquets and that held interest, too. The Alumni banquets were interesting because the students came back .
- MW: Do you think they came back for Bro. Ness more than anything else?
- CG: Well, they came back to the school because there was a real . . .
- FG: School spirit.
- CG: A real school spirit. And it was I think that now, speaking of the lay members of the District now, there was a real anticipation of going to the school activities -- the graduations and all. There was a real school spirit. It was just
- MW: Do you think it was because of the times? In the Depression times, people didn't have as much money. I have heard that in those times people went to church because they didn't have money to go any place else and they could do this free. Whereas now they have money and so much more diversity. Do you think you could attribute this to school spirit? Or is it because just in general people aren't going to church like they used to? All their interest used to be in the church. You just lived in church.
- CG: That's the same thing that carried over to the school.
- MW: In other words, now that it has waned in the churches, it wanes in the school, too.
- FG: It was in the school, too, though.
- CG: Brother Ness had such an enthusiasm, it was contagious.

FG: Something indefinable was there. It was just there.

CG: Now if he was away Now he was outstanding. Now I must say that. He was outstanding in the church. I attended the church when we were in Seattle and he was very outstanding. When I was there I felt there was a real spirit of sincerity, a real work of God. I really did. I think that he was just wholly inspired to the extent that he inspired others. Brother Ness was keen and quick and he was sensitive and it was a real vision he had. When he was home; when he was visiting with us, it was talk of the school, and talk of the Bible, and talk of the work of God, and talk of the people. It wasn't just a profession, it was a real calling, a life work. ~~But~~ His life was so involved, and yet he carried on his pastoral duties so that the people were satisfied. That's tremendous.

MW: Yes it is, because he really had two full-time jobs

CG: His people didn't seem to suffer, and they responded. He had his church missionaries, of course, who did visitation.

MW: Isn't this a leader--not to have to do all your work? Getting other people to work is the mark of a good leader.

FG: He had his problems, too, Mother.

CG: Yes, I'm sure he did.

The first third of this interview is missing because it did not record properly on the tape.