

Luther Reminiscences
Mary Lindell

I remember when I traveled from Missouri to start Luther College.
How unaware was I that Luther would give me so much more than general knowledge.

My father had been transferred from Rock Island, IL., to St. Jo. MO.,
With the Burlington Railroad, during the war, and oh, how I wanted to go

To college. Dad, I said, "There's a school I heard about, and I know.
It's just north of here, in Nebraska. Look on the map, let me show.

"This school's in a town called WAHOO, so it surely must have class,
And you can send me up to Omaha on a Burlington R.R. pass!

"I'll get a job to help earn part of my fees and my keep.
Wherever could we find an Augustana school so close by, with tuition so cheap?"

I soon learned, after my enrollment at Luther came to fruition,
That the only thing cheap about the place was the tuition.

Yes, it was a very small school in a very small town,
But there was nothing at all small about the Spirit I found.

Faculty, Formation of mind and heart, Faith, Friendships and Fun.

To match that strong young faculty, in a school of that size, would take an almost impossible
search. Most, later, went on to become honored professors at senior colleges of the church.

Iverne Dowie, Ethel Palmquist, Gladys Peterson, Ethel Ohman and Walter Fahrer.
Doniver Lund, "S.O." and "V.E." Johnson – ah, to our lives they were stellar.

We came to Luther with open minds and eager hearts,
Many of us not very tutored in letters and the arts.

The profs began with dedication to teach us how to learn and how to link
Ideas and make connections, how to write, and how to think.

Our faith was nurtured and challenged through Prexy Lauersen's chapel talks each day,
Through religion and ethics classes, we were encouraged to walk in Christ's way.

There were Bible studies, "singspirations," youth conferences, and much more.
To sing in Handel's "Messiah" was required of us – a curriculum core.

We practiced it, and rehearsed it, until we were pleased to realize
The “Messiah” had lodged in our hearts, and we’ve loved it all our lives.

A matchless gift from Luther is a treasure that far transcends
Many other treasures of our lives: good, close, heart-to-heart friends.

We did such a lot of walking and talking thru’ the two cemeteries, and around the “Section” –
That four mile hike around farmers’ fields, -- time to nourish growing affection.

Two summers I stayed in Wahoo – in ‘44 and ‘45, and was very
Happy to work in the office as Prexy’s secretary.

As the office amanuensis, I enjoyed a particularly challenging, educational caper:
The typing of Doniver Lund’s University of Nebraska Master’s thesis paper.

At Luther we sometimes got to do things we’d otherwise do only in a dream.
Where else could a 5’2” person, like me, be on a basketball team?!

Aah, to be a reader for our blind professor, Iverne Dowie, was a joy, a privilege, and became a
source
Of invaluable training - - easily equivalent to taking an extra course.

While you were reading, he kept teaching and expanding your vocabulary range.
He fired my lasting love for dictionaries, for words both wondrous and strange.

When you think it was wartime, and so many guys were being called away,
We still had some intelligent ones at Luther in our day.

Such as Carl Robert, and Carl, and Carl, and Carl, and Carl,
With initials P* and B* and S* and J* and J* – and then – *(Pearson, Bloomquist, Swanson,
Julius, and Johansson)

Yes, there was David.
His presence did enhance my Luther experience, with our cautiously budding romance.

It developed very slowly. It took from September to December
Before he asked me for a date, to church, as I remember.

I sensed he was interested but I was beginning to wonder whether
We’d ever start “walking around the Triangle” together.

You know, sometimes I wonder – how can anyone know,

While events are happening, just how God is going to go
To such lengths to prod and push and prompt us – God’s will for us to show?

Dave finished college at Bethany in KS and went up to Augustana Seminary to pursue
His theological training in Rock Island, and I ended up there too,
Because my father transferred back there, and I went to Augustana College to finish.
Thus our romance and our friendship did not have to diminish.

Next, the Missions Board sent Dave to Hartford, CT, Islamic graduate studies to pursue,
And I went to Minneapolis to join the Augustana H.Q. Youth Office crew.

As I got involved in writing, editing, youth conferences, I began to doubt that I really had a call
To the overseas mission field. Maybe I could be of more use in the USA, after all.

I think I was reluctant and afraid to have my life be hurled
Toward such an unknown future, way on the other side of the world.

So as some of you know – I didn’t go.
Dave went off to India alone.

Then I moved out to Denver to become youth director and parish assistant
At the big Augustana church. My joy in Colorado was persistent.

I loved working with youth, and all aspects of congregational life and interplay;
Confirmation, visitation, even taking the radio broadcast when the pastor was away.

The years flew by, and then it was time for David to ship out from Bombay
And come home on furlough, from India, back to the U.S.A.

He phoned me in Denver, and said he’d like to drive down
From Canada after his speaking tour – would I be in town?

The day David came to Denver, it turned out I had a helpful hunch
Maybe it would be easier for us if, when we met, we’d first go out for lunch.

Where to go? I had heard about a reputed Chinese place downtown
I had never been there, but knew it was a place of some renown.

So we ordered and ate, and engaged in light conversation, being very unprepared
To talk deeply yet, for after six years apart, we were both a little shy and scared.

Then the waiter brought the bill, along with two fortune cookies – you know how they do.
Well now! – through fortune cookies, has God ever spoken to you?

I opened up one cookie, read the fortune, and was astounded.
I glanced at Dave reading the other, and saw that he also was dumbfounded.

His read, "News of an old sweetheart who still thinks much of you."
Mine said, "Chance to go abroad with faithful marriage partner." I declare it's true!

I was so thunderstruck, that I capitulated. Was it not providentially apropos?
To God and to David, I said, "O.K. you win, to India I'll go."

Later that summer of '57, the youth and their parents joined in gang
To give us a fine wedding. The church council sponsored the whole shebang.

There followed a life in India, fascinating and full enough to banish my doubts and fears
During more than thirty, exciting, wonderful, adventurous years.

Today I keep remembering in new and joyous ways, the very great worth
Of this Luther man who took me off to live halfway around the earth.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to Luther, and to God, who filled that remarkable place
With God's spirit and God's call to live our lives by his grace.

So thank you, Luther, and thanks to you, God, --
You who caused this peripatetic life I have trod.

Thanks to all of you Augustana people who have heard this tale I tell.
I know that your own days at college affected your life as well.

So blessings on all of you, I pray, as I bow, and gesture in India's traditional way of giving
greetings.

And thus I say to each one of you: "Namaste!" and "Namaste!"