

1-1-2005

"100 Years of Augustana in China"

Steven C. Bahls
Augustana College

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/presidentsstatements>

Recommended Citation

Bahls, Steven C.. ""100 Years of Augustana in China"" (2005). *Speeches and Statements*.
<http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/presidentsstatements/19>

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the President's Office at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Speeches and Statements by an authorized administrator of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Founder's Day Convocation 2005 | Augustana College

"100 Years of Augustana in China"

Good morning and welcome to our 2005 Founders Day Convocation.

Founders Day at Augustana College was established by President Gustav Andreen at the very beginning of the 20th century as an occasion to remember the work of the very earliest figures in the College's history. The first of these celebrations consisted of elaborate programs with music and speeches by faculty, and - because Andreen was a consummate fundraiser - they always included an appeal for donations.

Today, you might be pleased to know, we'll continue two-thirds of that tradition. As for the third, if you'd care to use Founders Day as the occasion to make a gift the College, I'm sure our colleagues in the Development Office won't turn you away...but that's not our primary focus this morning.

On this Founders Day, we gather to celebrate a centennial anniversary. But more than an anniversary, we celebrate a relationship of long-standing. Like any relationship worth having, this one has had its challenges...it has held on in spite of them...and it has come out the stronger for doing so.

Augustana's ties to China date back to October 21st, 1905, when a young pastor and Augustana graduate named August Edwins, and his bride of just 46 days, Alfreda Anderholm Edwins, arrived in Shanghai. After several months of intense Chinese language study, the Edwins moved north to Henan Province. On their way, they passed through Wuhan, which is a focal point of our relationships with China today - but I'll leave that for Professor Symons.

In 1906, the Edwins were joined by Sister Ingeborg Nystul. Jane Tiedge from Augustana's Freistat Center for Studies in World Peace has done extensive research on Sister Ingeborg which I encourage you to explore. A deaconess born in Norway, she served - among other capacities - as a nurse in the Edwins mission. They would later be joined by a physician, Dr C.P. Freeberg. In the early years, fully a quarter of the Augustana representatives sent to China were medical personnel. By 1920 primary schools had been established in the five communities then served by Augustana missionaries.

The decade of the 1920s was marked by a series of profound hardships. A severe famine struck central China and would eventually claim as many as 5 million lives. But through the efforts of the Augustana Synod, some 100,000 people were sustained during the famine.

Typhus epidemics were a constant threat. One physician, a Dr. Oscar Lindorff, is estimated to have treated some 20,000 patients before succumbing to the disease himself, as would later be the fate of that first physician, Dr. Freeberg.

Political unrest took a heavy toll, and missionary educators and medical staff were under constant threat of kidnapping by armed bands which scoured the countryside and sometimes even took over whole cities.

The early 1930s saw a brief period of recovery, but Japan's invasion of China would - by the time it reached Henan in 1938 - force all of the Augustana personnel to flee west with whatever they could carry.

While World War II devastated the infrastructure of the Augustana Synod in China, its remaining representatives were able to serve as vital on-the-ground coordinators of relief supplies, flown in on a much-overworked twin-engined plane called the *St. Paul*.

After all of this, the Chinese Civil War marked the end of the Augustana Synod presence in central China, and by 1950 all remaining activities were relocated to Hong Kong.

Even removed from the People's Republic of China, the relationship continued. In 1951, a 12-year old boy arrived in Hong Kong from central China. He'd been sent by his parents to make the precarious journey to join two older sisters who were working with these relocated Lutheran institutions in Hong Kong.

By the time he was in his teens, it was clear to officials with the Augustana Association in Hong Kong that this promising young man needed a top-flight college education. With funds raised partially by students here in Rock Island, Dan Tsui was brought to Augustana, where he graduated in three years with a major in mathematics.

After Augustana, Dan Tsui's remarkable career included work with two other researchers which led to the discovery of a phenomenon known as the Fractional Quantum Hall Effect. This, in turn, led to the Nobel Prize in Physics being awarded to Dan in 1998 - an achievement celebrated here with the Daniel Tsui Lab in our Science Building.

Even though the Augustana Synod would go out of existence as part of a merger in 1962, its legacy remains.

According to Bishop Gary Wollersheim, when he travels around his Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, he can always identify which congregations had their roots in the Augustana Synod.

While he cites several reasons for this, two distinguishing characteristics that stand out for Bishop Wollersheim are a significant interest in social outreach, and a noteworthy degree of global awareness.

We like to think that in many ways - but particularly in the context of China - Augustana College continues that legacy.

That, however, is another story.

Fortunately, we have with us this morning one of the people best suited to bring this story up to the present. So it is my pleasure at this time to introduce Augustana College history professor - and director emeritus of the national ASIANetwork consortium - Dr Van Symons.



Accounting	Communication Studies	Geography	Music	Pre-Optometry
Africana Studies	Computer Science	Geology	Music Education	Pre-Pharmacy
Anthropology	Creative Writing	German Studies	Music Performance	Pre-Physical Therapy
Art	Economics	Greek	Neuroscience	Pre-Physician Assistant
Art History	Elementary Education	Graphic Design	Non-Profit Leadership	Pre-Seminary
Asian Studies	Engineering	History	Development	Pre-Veterinary Medicine
Biochemistry	Engineering Physics	International Business	Philosophy	Psychology
Biology	English (Literature)	Japanese	Physics	Religion
Business Administration	English (Writing)	Landscape Architecture	Political Science	Scandinavian Studies
Chemistry	Environmental Management	Latin	Pre-Dentistry	Secondary Education
Chinese	& Forestry	Library and Information	Pre-Law	Sociology
Classics	Environmental Studies	Science	Pre-Medicine	Sociology (Social Welfare)
Communication Sciences	Ethics	Mathematics	Pre-Music Therapy	Spanish
& Disorders	French	Multimedia Journalism	Pre-Nursing	Theatre
		& Mass Communication	Pre-Occupational Therapy	Women's & Gender Studies