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# A Community That Connects

Conrad Bergendoff

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## A COMMUNITY THAT CONNECTS

### *Conrad Bergendoff*

*Dr. Conrad Bergendoff graduated from Augustana College (Rock Island) in 1915--at the age of 19--and from the Augustana Theological Seminary in 1925. He later earned a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, and a Th.D from the University of Uppsala (Sweden). The author of many books and articles, Bergendoff concentrated on Swedish Reformation history, Martin Luther's works, and Lutheran church history in America. He served as President of Augustana College from 1936 to 1962, and President of the Augustana Seminary from 1936 to 1948. Augustana's fine arts building is named Bergendoff Hall.*

*In 1995 the Augustana community celebrated Bergendoff's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, and in December 1997 mourned his death.*

*The following remarks are excerpted from Dr. Bergendoff's address marking the opening of Augustana's new library in 1990. Though Bergendoff's brilliant chapel talks are legendary, he used that occasion to make more casual remarks about his 80 years of Augustana memories.*

*These remarks were prepared by Dr. David Crowe, who has been at Augustana College for nine years. Crowe splits his time between teaching English and serving as Director of Honors Programs.*

The happiest days of one's life, I think, are the days when you are preparing for teaching and look forward to a career in academic work. Augustana has been richly blessed with teachers and as I look back over my life, it's because I've had contact with teachers on both sides of the ocean that have shaped my own life . . . I congratulate the teachers here. If you can get to my age, nothing will give you greater satisfaction than to think of the success of your students.

I've been here since 1912, when I came as a student to Augustana and joined St. John's Lutheran Church, where I have been more or less throughout the years. So my life has been centered right here in the Quad Cities. What has given me the greatest joy here is the opportunity to try to bring together part of the various activities which have been sort of put away each in their own corner. It isn't what you yourself, by yourself, do - but what you've been able to do in cooperation with other people that gives you some kind of meaning in your own life.

And certainly, I think today of students. I was a little surprised that the mayor of Rock Island counted me among the fathers here at Augustana. The only other one that I think has done that is a student that came to me when I was in Wallenberg Hall and said, "Are you still alive?" He had seen my name around here--he thought I was one of the fathers or founders of Augustana. I'm not quite that old. No, I don't call myself one of the fathers. I call myself one of the sons.

My father graduated here . . . So my connection with Augustana, it goes way back to the earliest days. And the

students, when I came back here in 1912, were a small group. We were only 200 students. Strange thing is . . . I never thought we were small. Never thought it was a small school, even if we were only graduating a class of thirty. After all, size is pretty much within you, not outside of you. It's what you yourself think that makes you a part of the greater whole. The thing that has struck me all through these years is how Augustana has been anticipating a global education. That's now the thing today in the education field.

We've done that here since 1960. All of the faculty in 1960 and in 1875 when [the College] came [to Rock Island] were graduates of European universities. They were part of a much greater academic world than most of the institutions in the middle west, or even in the east. Bonds that we've had with Sweden from 1860, when you go back to the literature, you're reading letters to the university professors of Uppsala, you're following the curriculum that they had. In 1910 the Rector Magnificat--I like that term, Rector Magnificat--of Uppsala was here on the campus. And he said the graduates of 1910 would match any of the graduates of Uppsala at that time. And that's, what, only 50, 60 years ago? No, I guess eighty years ago.

We've been a part of a much larger world than we ourselves have understood. And all of these contacts have given us an outlook that has made the institution a liberal arts college in the true sense of the word. Last week, what was it, 77 students came back from Asia. That's been going on over twenty years. I doubt you'll find many colleges that have had a more universal output in their whole history than Augustana has had. And I've tried to use my writings and

research the last few years to discover things that we've forgotten. And we find in these early beginnings, something that has given us the inspiration for all the years that have followed. I said Augustana seemed to us large even in 1912 and now we're over 2000 students, we're part of a global educational world. It should give us some sense of our own importance in the task that we're having to do with students.

And how can anyone who spent his life with students regret that kind of career? To be able to see this younger

generation . . . and feel that we have somehow connected with them. You'll find our graduates all over the world. Pick up the alumni directory and you'll find them in practically every part of the world . . . many of them in high positions, even university presidents. So, it's not a small school, and it's not a small world. And to be able to connect our world with the world as a whole--that gives a liberal arts view. And to me that's been the great advantage of spending the years here--that our view has taken us to the ends of the earth.

## Walls: A Chapel Talk at Gustavus Adolphus College

September 11, 1997

Elizabeth Baer

*(Joshua 6:1-21) Now Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. {2} The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. {3} You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you shall do for six days, {4} with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. {5} When they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead." {6} So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and have seven*

*ark of the LORD." {7} To the people he said, "Go forward priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns in front of the and march around the city; have the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD." {8} As Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, of the LORD passed on, blowing the trumpets continually. blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. {9} And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets; the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. {10} To the people Joshua gave this command: "You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, nor shall you utter a word, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout." {11} So the ark of the LORD went around the city, circling it once; and they came into the camp, and spent the night in the camp. {12} Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. {13} The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark The armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. {14} On the second day they marched around the city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days. {15} On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. {16} And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the*

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Dr. Elizabeth R. Baer has served as Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, and Professor of English at Gustavus Adolphus College since 1992. Her intellectual and research interests include the Holocaust and women's personal narratives; her first book, *Shadows on My Heart: The Civil War Diary of Lucy Rebecca Buck of Virginia*, was published by University of Georgia Press in 1997. Her strong commitment to information technology in higher education has led her to serve on the Board of EDUCOM, a Twin Cities internet service provider, and to speak national and internationally, and to serve frequently as an information technology consultant.

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