

The Educator

It was my great honor and privilege to meet Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad during the period when The Presser Foundation was interested in the erection of Presser Hall at Bethany College, at Lindsborg, Kansas. Mr. Presser was still living when Dr. Pihlblad first came to our office and we were both deeply impressed by his sincere kindness, his obvious unselfishness, his grasp of the potentialities of Bethany in relation to a splendid future, and his intense earnestness in promoting musical educational ideals.

Our Department of Music Buildings at Colleges was considering many institutions at the time, but Dr. Pihlblad's presentation of the musical achievements and musical needs of Bethany were so frank and so strong that a grant was immediately made by the Foundation. During all of our transactions, Dr. Pihlblad's enthusiasm, practical common sense, and ability were notable. Later, when planning a trip to Sweden, he gave me many letters of introduction to distinguished Scandinavians who, I found, valued his friendship, his leadership, and his Christian nobility of character, quite as deeply as did those who knew him in America the land of his birth and achievement. He was a rarely gifted educator who did a special and important work in incomparable manner.

JAMES FRANCIS COOKE.

(President, The Presser Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.)



Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad, president-emeritus of Bethany College, passed away on December 9, 1943, at Topeka, when he was attending a regular meeting of the state merit board of which he was the chairman.

Dr. Pihlblad was a native of this area. He was born in Kansas City, March 18, 1873. He attended the Kansas City schools and then attended Bethany College where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in the first graduating class in 1891. He then enrolled in the Augustana Seminary from which he graduated in 1894. He served as pastor of Lutheran Churches in New Jersey for one year and returned to Bethany College as instructor in 1895. In 1900 he became vice president and in 1904 was elected president of Bethany College, a position which he held until his retirement in 1941 when he became President-Emeritus.

Dr. Pihlblad had a distinguished record as an educator, churchman and citizen. He served with distinction in many capacities in his church, community and state. The list of honors and responsibilities is far too long to mention here. Suffice it is to state that for forty-eight years he was associated with Bethany College and was President

and President-Emeritus for the past thirty-nine years. In all the history of Kansas no other man has served in a similar capacity for that many years.

If we think of a successful life from the point of view of material things Dr. Pihlblad was not very successful. Many men of Kansas have, in the eyes of the average person, filled positions of greater responsibility. None looms greater to those who possess discerning eyes. Probably no man in Kansas has had greater influence in promoting an education based on character building and Christian principles.

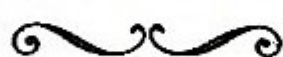
Possessed with a physique that was impressive and a sense of humor characteristic of his race, he was modest, quiet, unobtrusive. He never compromised his convictions but even so he had tolerance and understanding for all view-points.

Dr. Pihlblad might properly be called a "North Star" man. He was fixed by his loyalties and convictions so that his life had no uncertainty about it. He never wavered. You always knew where to find him. Through his kindly, sympathetic friendship, his sacrificial and worthy service, his earnest and high citizenship, his consistent Christian living, Dr. Pihlblad's life, like that of the North Star shone brilliantly, clearly and constantly as a guide and inspiration to others.

May the enriching values of his noble career stir our hearts with renewed strength for the duties of life in these strenuous days. May we who have associated with him in the Schoolmasters Club garner from his sterling qualities of head and heart inspiration for the tasks that lie ahead.

W. M. OSTENBERG.

(In behalf of the Kansas Schoolmasters Club, Superintendent of Schools, Coffeyville, Kansas, Bethany, '24.)



I am very happy and proud to be counted among President Ernst Pihlblad's friends. For fourteen years we were presidents of colleges located fifteen miles apart. No man had a better neighbor, for he was a gentleman, a friendly competitor. His friendship and sense of fairness went deeper than his rivalry. Often he introduced me to his friends as his "worst competitor, but one of his best friends". On football days we were "enemies", on all other days, friends.

Dr. Pihlblad had great influence in Kansas throughout a long public life. He was a friend of governors, senators, congressmen, preachers, and educators. He was, for a long time, the Senior College President of the state. Younger men looked to him for counsel and for inspiration. He helped reorganize the State Board of Education and then became the first representative of the Church Colleges on it. When elected to the State Senate, he resigned from the State Board of Education and recommended a friend for the position. As a sen-

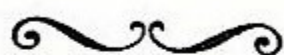
ator, he helped reorganize the State Textbook Commission. Dr. Pihlblad had a profound influence on Kansas education.

Dr. Pihlblad had many friends. He was alert to their needs and problems. He made many a trip in the interest of these friends and his memory will live on in them.

I shall always remember the genial disposition, the courteous manner, the bluff good nature, and the kindly good humor of my good friend.

V. F. SCHWALM.

(President, Manchester College, East Manchester, Indiana.)



Over half a century of Bethany History has been recorded since that memorable date of May 21, 1891 when a class of four young men, E. F. Pihlblad, Julius Lincoln, A. Westerlund and E. Glad were granted diplomas and thus became the first graduates of the institution. That day should bear a special significance to those of us who count ourselves members of Bethany's Alumni Association, for this first commencement marks the beginning of an organization which now numbers thousands.

Each year since then has added its quota of new members to the ever increasing roll and as we now survey the ranks we find included countless persons who have achieved renown in the fields of art, science, literature, music, education and the ministry. While all of these have reflected great credit upon our Alma Mater yet there is perhaps no class that produced a higher percentage of illustrious persons than this first class of 1891. It has been proven very forcibly that these young men sought from the start to hold firm that indispensable foundation for successful work and living that had been laid in their training.

Dr. E. F. Pihlblad, whose place in the annals of Bethany will always remain unique and apart, distinguished himself even from the time of his entrance in college as an exceptional student. His chosen field became oratory and his contributions to this field began very early. Among old records we find that his first oration entered in Bethany's initial oratorical contest in March, 1889 gave him highest rating and sent him and also his equally gifted colleague, Julius Lincoln, to the State contests. It is of singular significance that Dr. Pihlblad had chosen the theme, "The Future Greatness of the American Republic", for his oration and this was a subject which held for him a consuming interest throughout his entire life.

Dr. Pihlblad will be remembered by alumni of Bethany as their President, as a civic and church leader and as a friend. Because of his rare talent as a speaker he was able to open avenues of thought to help his hearers understand and sense the philosophy of life. His chapel messages to students as well as his sermons will be remembered as be-

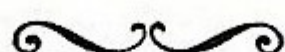
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ing full of the doctrine of sincere faith in God and people and also full of a sincere optimism. He possessed the rare attribute of being able to say the right thing at all times and it will be recalled that he clothed his ideas with expressive, vital words and pungent phrases.

We, who had the opportunity of knowing Dr. Pihlblad as teacher and friend, might well consider it a privilege to have touched his strong dynamic personality and to have learned to know and recognize his keen, quick sense of humor which was always charged with deep knowledge and insight. Through his teaching and by example of his own life we can grasp that great truth—that we should justify our lives through our words and through our works.

It would have been difficult to visualize a character as vital and useful as Dr. Pihlblad, to ever break down into helpless inactivity in the usual way of men and it does not seem strange that he should be taken from this life at a moment when he was engaged in work in which he was vitally interested. Nor does it seem strange that God, in His infinite wisdom, arranged his departure at such a time and even, perhaps, as he himself might have willed it.

Measured in the proper measurements of life's dimensions, Dr. Pihlblad had lived long and well. His was a life full of rich achievement and he has earned well the right to head the list of worthy Bethany alumni. May we pay this tribute to the memory of one who was indeed "a pattern of good works." (Titus 2.7.)

ALBA MALM.

(President, Bethany Alumni Association, Lindsborg, Kansas.)



To hold in esteem a memory is to have shared in companionable circumstances a fruitful and noble life.

The memory of Dr. Pihlblad's life commands the respect of all who knew him. His leadership in the school, the church, and the state encompassed the very foundations of human life itself. To have had consort with him was to have shared his life — for his conversation was not for the sake of conversation alone nor his mannerism affectations.

My generation shared the twilight of this life. But as experience grows with age, so wisdom matures with experience. It was in chapel where we students found this wisdom and learned respect for our "Prexy".

Dr. Pihlblad, though idealistic in his hopes and aspirations, gave pragmatic admonitions to his students. A familiar admonition — "Make a life, not a living". His talks, never repetitive, were filled with illustrative anecdotes and personal experiences. New thought approaches to the most common virtues added zest and vitality to searching and impressionable youth. I remember one series of talks

whose subjects were plagiarized from common bill-board advertisements. He once advised me in effect, "To suffer defeat is no disgrace — but to be mortally wounded by such defeat is a weakness of character".

Dr. Pihlblad was popular among students, but not overwhelmingly so. His greeting to a student was a gruff "Good Morning" or often just a nod. Far from indifference, this attribute was rather a desire to avoid the relay of petty gossip and grievances. The President of the Student Council on occasion upon knocking entered his office and inquired if he was busy. Without looking up from his mail, he mumbled, "You'll have to come back later." To which the student replied, 'But, sir, I'm busy, too, and this is my free period.' Dr. Pihlblad leaning back in his chair and with a smile slowly spreading over his face looked up at the brazen youth and said, "Sit down. Now what do you want?"

To commemorate as a heritage to forthcoming generations of students the memory of Dr. Pihlblad is surely adding a treasure to the tradition of Bethany College.

LT. PAUL D. ENGSTRAND, JR.
(Bethany, '40.)