

Lowell Benjamin Swan (1910-1969): The Measure of the Man

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ON JANUARY 18, 1969, a United Air Lines plane went down in the Pacific minutes after taking off from Los Angeles International Airport. One of the passengers was the Rev. Dr. Lowell Benjamin Swan, President of The Iliff School of Theology. In the months that have passed since the tragic Saturday evening, there have been many thoughts and many evaluations concerning this man. Many people have asked, "Who was this man?" What do we know about this quiet person who was in our midst, who had been a pastor to many people in all walks of life; whose paths were so varied, and whose acquaintances and associates so many that none of us knew more than a few facets of his personality? Only after he was gone from our presence did the breadth of his pastoral concern become better known to us; only then did we wish we had known more about this warmhearted individual who had gone about his work so unostentatiously that few really knew of his many interests and the plethora of his activities.

No group was more interested to know more about Lowell Swan than the faculty of The Iliff School of Theology among whom he had worked as President of the School and Chairman of the Faculty six and one half years. Consequently, in the period of adjustment it was suggested that some one take upon himself the task of preparing a study of the person whom each of us had grown to admire for our own, and diverse reasons. The material gathered here is an attempt to present a sketch of many aspects of his personality which none of us knew about at the time.

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The author would like to express appreciation especially to Mrs. Katherine Swan for her willingness to place her records, clippings and mementos at our disposal. Our gratitude is also expressed to the several individuals, family, parishioners and friends, mentioned below who added their own part to this story. Hopefully, an understanding of this personality can be gained from reading and re-thinking many of the aspects of the fifty-eight and one half years of Lowell's life.

Home Background and Early Life.

Lowell Swan was born into a family of deep religious faith, the American roots of which go back to Lowell's grandfather, the Reverend Oscar Swan. The first Mr. Swan came to the United States from Sweden in 1867 at the age of nineteen. At that time he was a member of the Swedish Lutheran Church. Soon thereafter he was attracted to the Methodist Episcopal Church where he had become a class leader and, in time, a local preacher. He joined the Rock River (Illinois) Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His heart was still partially in Sweden, however, and he returned there for a short trip in 1873, during which time he married. He brought his bride back to Illinois.

Starting about 1830 increasing numbers of Swedish people came to the United States settling in large numbers in the New York area and around Chicago. Many Swedish Methodist Churches were formed, parts of otherwise English-speaking Conferences. During the 1870's there was a movement to organize a group of Methodists of Swedish background into a separate Conference. Oscar Swan was one of the leaders of this development. A petition was sent to the General Conference

meeting in Baltimore in 1876, requesting legislation to permit various language-groups to set up separate Annual Conferences. Permission was granted, and in Galesburg, Illinois, the Northwest Swedish Conference was organized in 1877. This Conference included Swedish churches in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. There were thirty-six ministers, forty-four churches and 4,105 members.¹ By 1894 the Northwest Swedish Conference had doubled its membership and its numbers of ministers and churches. Many new states were included in its boundaries. In this year, by authority of the General Conference two years previous, the original Northwest Swedish Conference was divided into three Conferences: The Central Swedish Conference (centering around Illinois), the Western Swedish Conference (including Colorado); and the Northwest Swedish Mission, extending to the Pacific Coast.² Interestingly, the parallel Conference organization of the Swedish churches in the area from Massachusetts and New York to Delaware, where the earliest churches were established, was organized into the Eastern Swedish Conference only in 1901.³

Oscar Swan had a long and successful career in several Swedish Churches. He was elected a delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Church in 1896. Oscar Swan was the father of ten children, five of whom ultimately became either missionaries or ministers. One of the sons, the Rev. Eric Phillip Swan (born in Iowa, 1874), joined the

Northwest Swedish Conference in 1896 where his father was one of the leading ministers. Eric P. and Marie Larson Swan were the parents of seven children. They are: Paul E.; Beulah (Blomberg), a former missionary to India; Willis Phillip (died as a child); Everett N.; Melvin E. (died as a child); Evangeline (Johnson); and the youngest, Lowell Benjamin, born July 7, 1910. Eric Swan had a long and successful ministry, being a delegate to the General Conference of 1936. He had previously been a reserve delegate both in 1928 and 1932. In later life he was a frequent visitor to Denver until his death in 1959.⁴

A short time before Lowell was born the family had an experience reminiscent of the original Methodist family. On a dry summer Saturday afternoon the neighboring house was engulfed in flames, and the Swan parsonage soon met the same fate. With the help of the neighbors all were saved, several "brands plucked from the burning," but all the household effects were lost. The family was out in the streets of Chicago's north side until they were taken to various neighbors' homes from where they moved into the soon-to-be-demolished building of the Swedish Seminary on the campus of Northwestern University.

By the time of the Annual Conference, September 1907, Eric Swan told his bishop that the Lord had surely shown him that it was time to move to another church. Eric had suffered a serious fall on ice, two of his sons had died, and the parsonage had burned. He was then appointed to the mother church of Swedish Methodism in Chicago. While the family was serving at this church Lowell was born in 1910. But little Evangeline, age three, was not so sure this was welcome addition to the family.

¹ C. G. Wallenius and E. D. Olson, *A Short Story of the Swedish Methodism in America*, reprinted from the larger work *The Swedish Element in America*, Vol. II (Chicago: 1931), p. 53.

² Paul Douglas, "Bilingual Work and the Language Conferences," Chapter 22 of Vol. II, Emory Stevens Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism* (3 vols., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), II, 496.

³ Wallenius and Olson, *Swedish Methodism in America*, p. 19.

⁴ See the obituary of the Rev. Eric P. Swan, including names of the churches he served in "The Messenger," (a newspaper devoted to news of former churches of the Swedish Conferences), October, 1959.

When she first saw the baby she asked: "Mama, is it a baby girl?" Her mother replied that it was not. Evangeline was silent for a moment and then replied, "I suppose I can love him any way." Since the family had lost two sons only three years previous, this new son was welcomed with the deep love and concern which many parishioners already knew was the Swan family heritage.

The church where Lowell spent his first years was in the midst of change. The Swedish people were moving out to the suburbs and the church was being surrounded by Italians. There were conflicts involving Mafia killings. Even Eric once received a stray bullet in the sleeve of his coat while walking between the street car line and his parsonage. This parsonage family was repeatedly called upon to provide meals for destitute persons and homeless individuals. Even whole families were taken into the parsonage home on several occasions. When Lowell was one year old he went with his mother and youngest sister, Evangeline, for a visit to California where Lowell's maternal grandmother had recently moved. This provided a welcome respite for Marie Swan from the serious problems of a society in transition and the heavy responsibilities of a mother with small children. For the same reason, the Swan family often spent long periods of time at the campground at Des Plaines, Illinois.

Mr. Chester Olson who later was a parishioner of Lowell's in Denver and who is still active in Denver's Emmanuel Methodist Church, recalls an early experience with the Swan family. In 1913 he chanced to be at a summer camp where Eric Swan was a participant. Eric had his three-year-old son with him at the conference, introducing him to the varied roles of the ministry. Mr. Olson recalls that all of the Swan family he has known throughout the years were deeply sincere, and anxious to give of themselves in any situation where human concern was required.

In 1912 Eric Swan was appointed to the largest Swedish Methodist Church in the world, at Jamestown, New York. Here Lowell lived from his second to his seventh year, and here he attended the first grade. Lowell's mother was ill often in Jamestown, and care of the younger children fell to the oldest sister, Beulah. She writes of several experiences which she remembers well. When Lowell was approximately three years old the sides of his crib were so high that he could not climb out. Consequently, early in the morning he would call for his father to lift him out to begin a new day. Eric, tired from late nights and over work asked him to give just one reason why he should be out so early. Lowell usually had more than one reason, always different. The family called him their three-year-old "Philadelphia lawyer."

During the summers in Jamestown the family was usually involved in Church meetings held at Lake Chautauqua, New York. At the age of four Lowell insisted that he should take the row-boat on the lake by himself. As a compromise his father tied a rope to the boat near the dock and Lowell "rowed" back and forth to his heart's content. The same summer some neighbors decided that he should learn to swim, and to prove that he was not too young, they taught him.

Before he started school, Lowell made a habit of searching newspapers and magazines for letters and words he recognized. With the help of older brothers and sisters, he learned to read. On one occasion at about age four and a half, he copied down the brand name of his mother's facial powder and went to the store where a choir member worked and did his own Christmas shopping, much to his mother's amazement. His sister, Beulah, reports another incident, more like that of a typical "preacher's kid." One day she noticed all was quiet when Lowell and the "P.K." from the neighboring church were in the basement. She investigated and found the two had found paint brushes and red

paint. They were taking turns painting each other, and Lowell's head was covered. It took much turpentine and many tears to remove this particular "red and pink fringe."

In 1917 the family moved to Emmanuel Methodist Church in Galesburg, Illinois, where they remained for three years. Lowell saw his oldest brother, Paul, go to serve his country in France, while he continued his grade school years. During these boyhood years, the fact that both Lowell's father and grandfather were ministers colored his outlook in life. For example, the family remembers an interesting incident from boyhood play. Lowell and a cousin, nearly the same age, often played together. As the story goes, the cousin would usually act out the part of a millionaire business man and Lowell, knowing the part well, played the part of a minister. In later life, interestingly enough, the play-acting became reality. The cousin became a successful business man while Lowell ultimately studied for the ministry to make his success there. While Lowell was President of The Iliff School of Theology, this cousin did his part by making a contribution to the Scholarship funds of the seminary.

In 1920 Eric Swan was appointed to the Emmanuel Methodist Church in Evanston, Illinois, where Lowell began fifth grade. Three years later, the older sister, Beulah, a college graduate, left for India as a missionary. She reported that Lowell was in eighth grade and about shoulder high at that time. But when she returned six years later, Lowell had graduated from high school and was over six feet tall. She had to ask who it was driving the truck for the local candy manufacturer. The fact that several of his family were involved in various vocations within the church had an influence on Lowell early in life.

The strict home background of the minister's family earlier in this century also affected Lowell in another way. When he was old enough, he carried a newspaper route and faithfully went

from house to house to collect from his subscribers. Lowell knew that his father would become suspicious if he should borrow from his earnings for any purpose. He was also forbidden to go to a Saturday afternoon movie. On one occasion, Lowell decided to keep the money intact and sneak into the theatre without paying. No one would be the wiser. Alas, Lowell's faithful dog knew where his master was, and waited patiently beside the bicycle outside the theatre. This is where father Eric found dog, bicycle and boy as he chanced to pass down that street on that specific Saturday afternoon. When the dog finally died Lowell was so saddened that he never seemed to want another pet.

In 1924, by the time Lowell was in High School, his father became Presiding Elder of the Conference and lived in Evanston, Illinois, where Lowell completed High School. Lowell reported that his proximity to Garrett Biblical Institute led him to consider the ministry while in High School. He resisted the idea at this time. As he stated it, because he practically worshipped both his father and his mother, he felt he was "not good enough" for the ministry. His career would be, rather, in medicine.

College Education

Many in the family had already attended Northwestern University because it was close to their home and it was financially possible for the youth to work their way through school. Lowell would probably have attended Northwestern except for the influence of Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes. At the end of his high school years and during the years following, Lowell travelled to many meetings in the Conference where Bishop Hughes was speaking. Hoping to study medicine, and following the suggestion of Bishop Hughes, Lowell entered DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana in September, 1929. Bishop Hughes made it possible for Lowell to enter his own fraternity, Delta Tau Delta, where Lowell was soon appointed

Chaplain. In addition, Bishop Hughes provided some financial aid for Lowell during his first year in college.

One of Lowell's memorable experiences while at DePauw for his two years was his student job as chauffeur for the President of the University, who at that time was G. Bromley Oxnam, later Bishop of the Church. Soon thereafter, the Rev. Eric Swan was appointed to the Swedish Church in Des Moines, Iowa. The depression produced financial problems, and in September, 1931, Lowell transferred from DePauw to Drake University in Des Moines where he could live at home while he finished his last two years of college. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1934 with a major in history. The registrar wrote: "His grades were all very good, in fact, the record shows only two grades of 'C'; all others were 'A' or 'B's.'" His interest in history continued throughout the remainder of his life.

By the time he arrived at Drake University as a junior "Spike" (as he was called in College) felt another call to consider the ministry, and again he tried to resist its challenge. He was not successful, however, and soon began planning seriously for a career in the Church. As a twenty-one year old college student he began to serve the small Swedish Church at Harcourt, Iowa, near Des Moines. Since he followed an older and more experienced man in the church, many parishioners were disheartened, thinking this student was not adequate for their needs. There was even talk of disbanding the small struggling church. Lowell proved an adequate pastor, however, for the church was not closed, and he remained there from 1931 to 1934 until he graduated from college. While there, he took eggs and other produce to sell in Des Moines in order to receive his salary. Also, a single college student who was in Harcourt only on weekends did not need the parsonage, so it was

rented to a local family. Lowell was their guest in the parsonage each weekend as he returned.

Among the parishioners who knew Lowell at Harcourt, Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Nordblom recall many interesting situations when Lowell was their minister over thirty-five years ago. They wrote: "Our first impression of him was very good. He was an earnest, enthusiastic young man holding down two jobs — at the church and at school in Des Moines. He drove seventy-five miles two, and sometimes three, times each week. We saw Lowell develop into a fine speaker and a good pastor during the time he was with us. Visitation was a strong point with him. He was well-liked by the young people and the older people were naturally drawn to him in his mission of furthering Christ's work. He was often in our home. We thought of him almost as a son and loved him dearly.

"One of the incidents that stand out about Lowell occurred during a Ladies' Aid auction in the church recreation room. It was during the depression days in 1933, and the sale was going badly. Then in walked Lowell and his brothers and other members of his family — all big men with big hearts and big enthusiasms. The bidding picked up beautifully and the sale was more of a success than the depression times justified. He very well fulfilled the high hopes and predictions we had for him. He was able, energetic and Christ-centered, striving to lead God's plan ahead and to do his part."

In October 1934 Lowell enrolled in the University of Nebraska to study for a Master's degree in history. Again, he was interested in gaining ministerial experience, so he began preaching in the little Wesley Swedish Methodist Church in Lincoln, which had sixty-six members. He determined at the outset that he would turn both numbers upside down so they would have ninety-nine members. Before he left the church in less than two years, this was accom-

⁵ In a personal letter from Robert C. Scheetz, Registrar at Drake University, to the author of this article, October 3, 1969.

plished. In addition, several other experiences were gained while he was in Lincoln.

He became acquainted with one family especially which was quite active in the small church. They helped him to know the people and invited him to their home often. One of the daughters, Katherine, was the church secretary, taught Church School and Bible School, was president of the Epworth League and sang in the church choir. She and her sister, Jeanette, felt that there were not enough youth their own age in this small church and they began attending another Lincoln church. Also, they felt they did not want to distract the young minister from his pastoral responsibilities and his studies.

As Lowell was getting the church work organized, however, Mrs. Short became ill with a heart attack, and the young minister continued to be a frequent visitor in the home. Katherine and Jeanette were usually there also, and seemingly they could not avoid seeing him often. One evening after a wedding Lowell took Katherine and Jeanette home in his jalopy. Because of a severe thunder and lightning storm, Jeanette insisted she did not want to go on any detours, or make any stops at the soda fountain that evening. She said that she "did not want to get caught in the rain with a preacher." Katherine did not agree with her sister and evidently did not fear either rain or preachers.

Katherine M. Short and Lowell B. Swan were married June 1, 1936. In September of that year they came to Denver where Lowell enrolled in The Iliff School of Theology and began his ministerial career in Colorado.

First Swedish (Emmanuel) Church

When Lowell and Katherine Swan came to Denver in 1936 they came to attend the Western Conference of the Swedish Methodist Church meeting that year in Denver. During that meeting the Swans stayed in the home of Mr.

and Mrs. Bryce Morris, members of the First Swedish Church. Mr. Morris said that it was almost as though the Swans spent their honeymoon in his home, and he has been associated with the family since that date.

During the Conference Lowell was appointed to the church in Denver where he began a ministerial career in a Conference where his father was not well known. Here Lowell could develop his ministry independent of the influence which his father enjoyed farther east. The church in Denver was located at Twenty-Second Street and Court Place in downtown Denver, and at that time had approximately one hundred members. It had a history going back to 1883, but had never had a large membership. While Lowell was at First Swedish he gave many hours of time beyond the call of a small student pastorate. Many people felt that he devoted nearly full-time service to their church and he gained the admiration and respect of all with whom he came in contact. Mr. Edward Karlsson reports that Lowell had a capacity to talk to individuals of all ages, and in all walks of life. Even as a student minister he had a remarkable manner of making all people feel at home and feel enthusiastic about the faith which Lowell exemplified. Mr. Bryce Morris stated: "He had the most human touch of any pastor I have ever known."

Even with his student responsibilities, Lowell's activities were not confined to one church. He conducted services at the Florence Crittenton Home (for unwed mothers), the Holland House (for delinquent girls), Booth Memorial Hospital (Salvation Army center for unwed mothers), and Citizen's Mission on Larimer Street. On Sunday afternoons he was hospital chaplain at the Swedish National Sanitorium in nearby Englewood, Colorado. Katherine went along to assist and to play the piano.

But Katherine Swan did her part at home also. Destitute people in the core city heard that they would receive help

from the parsonage at First Swedish, and for a time, Katherine supplied many of these people from her own food supply. Luckily, when some women of the church heard about this social concern, they began to contribute the food for what became the "Church Pantry." Also, Katherine prepared some rooms in the parsonage and rented them and a basement apartment to obtain some needed money to keep Lowell in school. She also organized a kindergarten of neighborhood children where she taught the children crafts, singing and even how to comb their own hair. She even mended clothes and made new garments for them. At First Swedish, William Phillip Swan was born, but died as an infant.

A humorous chapter in this ministry is not well known. Lowell became acquainted with "Bishop" Rice, a familiar sectarian leader in Denver a generation or more ago. Mr. Rice, without any credentials set up his "Church" as a parody on the traditional churches, and introduced some most unusual elements for communion in his church. "Bishop" Rice decided that Lowell needed another title and he arranged to have him dubbed "Bishop of Swedish Methodists of Colorado." The consecration service, so it is reported, consisted of "horsefeathers and applesauce." While he was at First Swedish, Lowell did receive a *bona fide* ordination, however. On September 4, 1938, he was ordained Elder by the Swedish Bishop Adna Wright Leonard. The ceremony took place in the Swedish Church in Jamestown, New York, where Lowell had lived as a child.

While Lowell was giving of himself so wholeheartedly, he was also a full-time student at The Iliff School of Theology where he kept his grades well above the "B" average. He served one year at President of The Iliff League. Lowell graduated from seminary in 1940 with the degree of Master of Theology. During his third year at First Swedish, the members decided to change the name of their church. There was little

use of the Swedish language in the church and Lowell never conducted services in that language. A movement to merge various language churches into the geographical Conferences where they were located was given further encouragement by the Uniting Conference of 1939 and the establishment of the Jurisdictional organization. The West Swedish Conference would have churches in two Jurisdictions, which seemed unacceptable. Consequently, in preparation for the merger of the Swedish churches into the Colorado Conference, the congregation changed the name of their church, on January 1, 1939, to Emmanuel Methodist Church. Lowell served the church until the Conference of 1940 when he had completed his requirements for the degree at the theological school. His annual salary was listed at \$1,320 of which only \$1,065 was paid that year. The membership in 1940 was 115.

As a Chaplain

The Swedish National Sanatorium, located immediately south of Denver in the suburb of Englewood, was supported by Swedish churches from a large geographical area. One of the officers in the Sanatorium was John Nelson a member of First Swedish Church in Denver. Through his influence Lowell accepted a position as Field Representative and Chaplain at that institution, immediately upon completion of his seminary training. The position included not only the usual type of Chaplain's work, but it involved also public relations and fund raising for the institution. Lowell visited most Swedish Churches in a many-state area, and preached in many of them during the next two years. For a portion of this period he worked out of Minneapolis, and lived for short periods at Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Iowa, and St. Charles, Illinois. Then he moved to Savanna, Illinois. While working in this Illinois area Lowell also served the Community Church of Savanna on Sundays. His several months in Savanna involved an interesting coincidence for

the Methodist Church in the same town was served by his brother-in-law, the Rev. Albert Blomberg, who had married Lowell's sister, Beulah, after she returned from India.

One of Lowell's older brothers served in World War I, and in the months following Pearl Harbor, Lowell felt that he must fulfill his ministerial call in the service of his country. In July, 1942, he resigned from the Sanatorium and was commissioned as Chaplain in the United States Army. He was immediately sent to Fort Mason, California, where he was assigned to duty aboard the "Peter Burnett", a troop transport ship sailing across the Pacific. It was on one of his trips that Lowell had a near escape from war's destruction. On January 17, 1943, this ship was torpedoed by the Japanese in the Tasman Sea, between New Zealand and Australia. The ship had left its troops and was making a voyage loaded with wool. In the hold next to where Lowell and the ship's doctor were sleeping, where the torpedo struck, the wool blunted the shock of the hit, and kept the ship afloat. Immediately after the strike, however, the crew boarded life rafts, not knowing how much damage had been done. Only one crew member lost his life. After they spent a night on the rafts amid waves estimated to be thirty-five feet high, they decided to return to the crippled ship to await rescue. They were returned to Sydney, Australia, where Lowell was assigned to the military hospital and where he continued to work for several months.

During this time Katherine lived near relatives in Evanston, Illinois, with her children Mary Katherine and Martha Ann, awaiting the birth of their next child. David was born in December, but because of the torpedo incident, Lowell was not aware of David's arrival until the end of April. Many cablegrams were sent, but the Red Cross was not able to deliver them because of some confusion as to where Lowell was stationed. In May Lowell was flown home for a ten days' furlough for recuperation and rest

—and to visit his five-month-old son.

Lowell was then re-assigned to the troop transport, "Poelau Laut," a Dutch ship on which he served for the remainder of the time he was in the army. While serving on this ship officials realized that Lowell had not attended any chaplain's school. He was sent for a six weeks' period of training at Harvard, November and December, 1943, after having had almost a year and a half's experience! He liked to say that he had "been through Harvard University in six weeks."

His experiences on shipboard later found their way into a sermon which he preached at Warren Church a few years after he was discharged. "I remember when living on the ship that we had the same situation, — increased tension with the need to strike back. Whenever we would move into a submarine zone, and hour after hour the reports of submarines would come in over the radio, you could see the tension begin to mount on board ship. You could see people who were very close friends begin to "pick" and "bite" at each other. And, after days of living under that kind of tension, the very finest of friends would be mortal enemies. The most innocent remark concerning the weather would drive some people into a stream of abuse that was terrific."

After the war ended Lowell was discharged in December, 1945, and he and Katherine and their family made their way back to Denver. Two years after he was discharged, in 1947, Lowell was awarded the Bronze Star.

Arvada Methodist Church.

In December 1945 Lowell was appointed to the Methodist Church in Arvada, a suburb of Denver which had not yet felt the effects of the post-war population expansion which would soon transform it from a rural suburb into a small city. When Lowell began his ministry at Arvada the population was 1500 and the church membership, 441. During his eighteen months' pastorate the town population and the church membership

both remained stationary. It was not until after 1950 that the movement of population came to Arvada. In 1969 the population is 55,000 while the church is one of the largest in the Denver Metropolitan area with a reported membership of 1981.

Statistics do not tell the whole story of this period of Lowell's pastoral experience, however. Almost immediately the people felt the warmth of his personality and the depth of his concern for every individual. In the Post Office one lady was explaining the new enthusiasm which had come to the small church. She said to her friend, "You should hear our new minister! He's so simple." Unknown to the ladies, Lowell was in the Post Office also and heard the conversation. The lady who spoke was embarrassed for she realized that what she said could be taken two ways. They joked with Lowell about this many times in the future, for he felt it was really a compliment. As the lady later explained, Lowell did not talk over people's heads, nor did he use confusing theological terms merely to prove his superiority. Rather, he met every person where that person was, he used everyday experiences of the people gained from his extensive pastoral visitation. He became a part of the community very soon, and many people felt they could really share in the thoughts and the religious living of this ex-Chaplain who had come among them.

Lowell spent considerable time in getting acquainted with his people not only in Arvada but in each church he served. Although he was there only eighteen months, he made friendships which continue to this day. An evidence of his success in drawing many people to the concern of the church came on the day when under his leadership the church completed the payments and burned the mortgage on the church which had been constructed in 1926-1931. One Arvada friend told of a situation in which an infant had been accidentally killed. Lowell was called, and so took charge of the

details following the tragic incident and planned the funeral that a lasting memory of deep faith and confidence was left not only with family members but with casual acquaintances and non-church members who attended the funeral. Another family told of Lowell's part in their family circle which was so intimate that over ten years later when they celebrated a seventy-fifth birthday with many friends, the circle was not complete until Lowell and Katherine Swan arrived.

In Arvada Lowell continued his work outside the walls of the church, as was always his manner. One person told of the baseball team he coached because he was interested in winning the loyalty of many youth in the area. The "Teen Canteen" which was also part of Lowell's vision for service to youth was begun during his brief stay, and continued after he moved on. Each issue of the weekly paper in Arvada carried a short column, entitled "The Upward Look," written by Lowell Swan. An Arvada member often met Lowell down town and they had coffee in the local coffee shop which was also a pool hall. One day Lowell was asked if it was appropriate that they should drink coffee there or if they should find another place to visit. Lowell's reply was: "No, this type of place won't affect me, and, besides, I might meet some one who needs me." Lowell felt that his time should not be confined to the church, but that his services belonged also to the community. It was in Arvada that Lowell joined the Masonic Lodge, again, to become a part of the larger community.

Very soon after Lowell came to Arvada he became a good friend of many ministers of the Denver District. Among these was Dr. Frederick J. Cox, who had served as minister of Warren Memorial Church since 1928. Dr. Cox felt drawn to Lowell because their personalities, and their styles of ministry were similar. Both were very warm-hearted and deeply interested in being personally related to people in need. On

one occasion Dr. Cox expressed his confidence in Lowell and said something to the effect that this was the type of individual he would like to have succeed him. He also considered inviting Lowell to become his associate at Warren.⁶ Ironically, on May 24, 1947, when Lowell had been in Arvada only eighteen months, Dr. Cox died of a heart attack just two months short of his fifty-sixth birthday. Warren Church was without a minister only a few days before the Annual Conference meeting. At the Conference sessions held that June, Warren Church was left "to be supplied," and Lowell was appointed to Arvada again.

Negotiations were even then under way, and Lowell was sharing various aspects of his decision with many close friends in the Arvada parish. Several recall conversations they had with Lowell at the time. He knew it was an excellent opportunity for advancement, but he knew also that his work was not completed in Arvada. He had many more things in mind for them yet. Finally, after having preached at Warren Church late in June and early July, Lowell decided to go to Warren Memorial Church where he in fact became the successor to Frederick Cox.

Warren Memorial Methodist Church.

In July, 1947, Lowell Swan was transferred to Warren Church where he was to remain for fifteen years. At the time the membership was listed at 795. At Warren Church Lowell's family grew to adulthood, his quiet method of ministry behind the scenes continued, he had a significant influence on several young men who later chose the ministry for their profession, most of whom graduated from The Iliff School of Theology, and he led in two projects to expand the building.

From the beginning, Warren people felt that Lowell was an ideal successor

to their much-beloved Dr. Frederick Cox. This is confirmed by a letter concerning Lowell's work which was sent by the Official Board at the end of his first year. "The wisdom of the choice has been manifested in the wonderful work that Rev. Swan has done for the church in the one year he has been with us. He is sincere, earnest, and untiring in his work to make Warren the most successful Church that he can. He realizes the importance of the work that Dr. Cox has started and understands the resources that will make for finer and stronger living. He is interested in the young people of the church and is very popular with them. His three years as Army Chaplain has made him unusually successful as a consultant in personal matters and everyone feels that he will counsel them wisely and well when they need help. He is sympathetic and constant in his work with those sick or in trouble." A week after he arrived Lowell expressed his philosophy of his ministry in a letter to the congregation in which he said: "Your new pastor would like to have an opportunity for a quiet talk with each one of you. Since this is impossible for the present, please let this letter take its place. . . We covet your prayers, your presence, your service and your finest cooperation. Please feel that you can count on me, as your pastor, to give sympathetic support and help whenever it is needed . . . Let us work together, sharing in the blessings that shall come from our labors." (July 25, 1947). *The Rocky Mountain News* (May 31, 1948) summarized his Memorial Day sermon, in which Lowell used the theme for the day as an aspect in inner faith and inner poise. "Remembering is linked with doing familiar things. . . It is the quality of our every day life rather than 'crisis living' which reveals the amount of our remembrance. The influence of great souls on our lives is recalled by the fineness of our living in ordinary circumstances. The courage of some father or mother in facing the difficulties of life is remembered by a

⁶This is confirmed in correspondence during the last few months of Dr. Cox's life, filed in Warren Church files.

like courage reflected in us. The sacrifices of some in giving their very lives is remembered by like sacrifices we are willing to make in our own way. The high dedication to noble ideas by some one near and dear to us is recognized by indicating those same ideals in our being. Thus do we remember them in our living."

Lowell emphasized the place that psychology had in the practice of the Christian life, again following the lead of his predecessor at Warren. In the fall of 1950, for example, he arranged a series of sermons on the general theme of "Applying the Christian Faith to Everyday Living." These nine titles indicate the general direction of his thinking. "Obtaining God's Protection;" "Practicing God's Presence;" "Facing Crises Hopefully;" "Releasing the power within;" "Antidote to Fear;" "To know why people suffer;" "Keeping fit — not fitful;" "Living with Emotions;" "Sharing Yourself." For each of these sermons he prepared a small card with the title, a poem, a scripture verse as a reminder for parishioners to carry with them throughout the next week.

One sermon preached in 1950 expressed his emphasis on the inner stamina which a meaningful faith would bring to a troubled soul. Some of the major emphases of that sermon may be summarized as an example of much of his preaching over a number of years. He entitled it "In Lieu of Complaining."

"In these days of crises, there is a feeling of frustration that comes over people, and that feeling expresses itself in many different ways. Often they strike out at anyone in sight or within hearing. They often pick upon those they love without discrimination, and it seems to give them a measure of temporary relief. Actually, it stirs up a hornet's nest of real trouble, and eventually they make themselves more miserable." He lists various social, regional, and world problems.

"Now, all of this on the individual

level creates real tension. Something happens within yourself. You begin to tighten up and everywhere you turn you run up against a blank wall that creates more tensions. . . . We strike out at anything at hand. We say things we don't mean and we say things to those we love that hurt and hurt deeply."

"I think this is a very deep problem, for I frankly don't feel that the crises under which we live will be over for many, many, many years. In other words, I believe we are going to have to learn to adjust ourselves to the crisis kind of life. . . . The situation in the world today is such that irritates people and causes tension. I firmly believe that the sooner we learn that is what is happening to our world the soon we are able to live in this kind of situation.

"How do we meet these problems. . . . Some try liquor . . . wild parties . . . gambling.

"The Christian Faith provides a more adequate method to deal with tensions. Saul, the Jewish zealot, became Paul the Apostle in a crisis situation on the Damascus Road. Paul came to realize that he was not so much pressed from outer tensions but he was unhappy within. He reevaluated himself and won the victory. We must take this illustration and apply it to our own lives." His major emphases are these three:

(1) We must look within. We need to re-evaluate our self as we really are. We must not succumb to tensions pressing us from outside. (2) An examination of our inner self in the light of the Christian message puts our external tensions in true perspective. The Christian Faith gives us "courage to play the adult in this present world." (3) The Christian Message provides hope for a second chance — a chance to live above mistakes, a chance to mold our lives in the future different from the past.

"The example of William James, suggesting that Christians have 'twice-lived lives,' is applicable to us. Even though we live in the midst of tensions, frus-

trations, and mistakes, we have the possibility of new strength, new beginnings. The Christian faith provides the inner strength which is needed."

On person stated his preaching method succinctly. "His sermons were filled with deep earnestness, presented with quiet simplicity."

As soon as the parishioners had confidence in their new minister, they were willing to envisage new goals for their church along with him. Almost as soon as he began his ministry at Warren, Lowell began a drive to complete the dream of an educational building which his predecessor had also dreamed about. The sanctuary, and only building at Warren, had been built in 1909. In 1947 a Committee was formed to administer the new Frederick J. Cox Memorial Fund. They would build the new building. In February, 1952, they broke ground for what became the Frederick J. Cox Memorial Building. The main speaker on that occasion was Professor Martin Rist, of The Iliff School of Theology, who years before had been a classmate with Dr. Cox at Iliff. The consecration of the \$90,000 addition was held in December of the same year. Also in the first year at Warren, Lowell led them to institute the Frederick J. Cox Memorial Lecture series at Iliff. Several lectures have been given under these auspices each year since they were established in 1948.

In 1952 the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Church was celebrated. Actually, the organization had been established in 1900 but regular services began only in 1902. For the brochure prepared on this occasion Lowell insisted his name and accomplishments not be listed, although he had been at Warren over four years by then. He would give full credit to the pioneers who proceeded him. And so it was that the brochure included photographs of former ministers and stories of their work. But there is no photograph of their present minister. The story barely gives the name of the man who came there in 1947.

During the planning for this anniversary the members became aware of one troubling fact. In all their fifty years as a church not a single young person had entered the ministry from their congregation. Lowell determined to change that and made a conscious effort to emphasize the importance of the ministry, and he dedicated himself and the church to this goal. There were surprising results. During the ten years he was to remain at Warren, four youth from the church entered the Methodist ministry, and six others who had grown up elsewhere were associated with Warren, and with Lowell's ministry, in such a way that their ministry was molded in part by the Warren influence. The four Warren youth are: Warren Swartz, Claude Guldner, Austin Vick and Ray Muhr. All are graduates of The Iliff School of Theology, all are serving in the Methodist Church to the present, and all feel they owe a great debt to Lowell for his encouragement. The six other men closely related to Lowell's ministry were assigned to work at Warren Church while they studied at Iliff. These six are: Earl Hanna, Carroll McLaughlin, Elwood Davidson, Homer Bollinger, Robert Gilmore and Robert Bright who spent several years in missionary service in Africa. All ten of these young ministers speak of their appreciation for the concerned leadership and direction which Lowell gave to them during their earlier years. This record of ministerial recruitment and influence is not often equalled. Lowell was also anxious to give retired ministers in the congregation a chance to participate. For several years he planned special parts in services for active retired men such as Otto Domer and John Flynn.

In 1949 Lowell determined to use his "G.I. Bill" benefits to obtain a further degree from Iliff. He completed his Doctor of Theology degree in August 1951, writing a thesis concerned with the history of Methodism in the state of Colorado. During the same time he introduced a second worship service at

Warren, he organized new groups among couples and youth, and strengthened financial organization. Not being busy enough he was also active in several community programs. He was a member of the board of the Children's Movie Council, working with the Camp Fire Girls, Scouts, libraries and Community Service agencies to bring a better quality of movie to the children of Denver. He conducted services at the Denver jail. He was chaplain at Holland House, a home for delinquent girls. He also participated in such organizations as the Masonic Lodge and the Denver Council of Churches.

In 1957 he led in yet another improvement in the Church building. The chancel was enlarged to allow for a larger choir. A large memorial window was installed in a new wall built at the front of the chancel, and the organ was moved and renovated. The cost of this significant improvement in the original forty-eight year old sanctuary was \$31,600.

Lowell's family entered wholeheartedly into the life of the Church at all age levels, Church School, youth groups and Women's groups. The Swans' four children grew to maturity among the Warren people: Mary Katherine (Hodge), who was married at Warren Church; Martha Ann (Dohm), who was married in the Iliff Chapel soon after Lowell became President; David Lowell, who was married in a Denver Roman Catholic church where his father participated as one of the ministers in the ceremony; and Nancy Jane, who was born soon after the Swans moved to the Warren parsonage. Parishioners who were close to the family have suggested that Lowell's intense concern for every member's problems, and his extensive service in the larger community, must have robbed the family of much of the fellowship they otherwise would have had with their husband and father. Members of the family, however, are the first to deny this, for they feel that they were also a part of the total community, and their

interests grew to be as broad as Lowell's were.

A Minister beyond the Parish.

Not only were Lowell's pastoral concerns known to his parishioners in several churches, but his personality had its influence in the larger community among associates and even among casual acquaintances. Dr. Harvey Potthoff, who returned permanently to Denver in the same year that Lowell arrived (1936), and who was associated continuously with Lowell in the Denver District during the intervening years, summarized his experiences with Lowell. "He was a bridge-builder. His spirit moved across the lines of age and race and creed and social status. He was ecumenical long before many persons had heard of the ecumenical movement. He reached out to people as persons — and they responded . . . At heart, Lowell Swan was a pastor. He brought the touch of healing and renewing grace as he ministered to all sorts and conditions of men — in all sorts of circumstances." Dr. Walter G. Williams, Interim President of The Iliff School of Theology immediately following Lowell's death, reflected on his experiences. "He met thousands of persons, and always they were individuals, not just people. Quickly they found themselves at ease in his presence, and his inner strength soon communicated itself to them. This was the man for whom they had been searching. Here was a man who could help because he understood."

James C. Keeseey, a student colleague while Lowell was working on his doctoral degree, and later a ministerial colleague in the Denver District, spoke for the Alumni Association. "The depth of his spiritual life early impressed me. His prayer emphasis and his hospital ministry profoundly affected the lives of many people. He was frequently called by ministers outside the city who did not feel they could trust their hospitalized parishioners to anyone else. . . . All of these qualities were evident as I worked with Lowell — his personal interest in

faculty and student, his quiet, strong, unassuming manner, his encouragement and support." Speaking for the Iliff Board of Trustees, Mr. C. E. "Bud" Wright said: "Lowell Swan overflowed with kindness, generously shared with all who came into contact with him. He was unbelievably patient, sympathetic, understanding and completely unselfish. Always he spoke softly and with great gentleness. Lowell possessed that quiet deep-rooted Christian courage far beyond the understanding of most men which provided a quiet inner peace and great strength in times of turmoil. He had wonderful dreams for Iliff — for its faculty, its students, and for its graduates."

Bishop R. Marvin Stuart of Denver, after knowing Lowell only four years, caught the same spirit when he said about him: "He was one of the kindest men one might find anywhere and certainly among the most thoughtful. His was a rare quality of compassion. He cared and cared deeply about life and about persons. This caring was an amazing composite of a cultivated imagination and a deep desire to be a vital part of life and to be of use to his fellow men. It was the capacity to get out of himself, to be involved in the lives of others, to care deeply about people who sometimes do not deserve to be cared about. It meant to him affirming life and its goodness in spite of all of its contradictions and inconsistencies. It meant yielding himself to life whatever phase it presented, whether it be his precious family, or a church family, or the members of a faculty, or a student body. It meant concern for an individual student in need of a friend. It meant stretching out his arms to his beloved mountains or listening to a grandchild. He cared about life and cared deeply."

Such was the esteem in which his fellow Ministers held him that Lowell was elected a delegate to the General Conferences of 1956 and 1960. During the latter Conference, meeting in Denver, Lowell served as Chairman of the Com-

mittee on Arrangements. He was elected Reserve delegate in 1964, and was an Alternate Delegate to the Jurisdictional Conference in 1968. Thus the Swan family could boast of three generations in succession as delegates to the Church's highest governing body. From 1949 to 1962 Lowell served as Chairman of the Committee on World Service and Finance of the Rocky Mountain Conference. From 1951 to 1963 he was Vice President of the Rocky Mountain Conference Methodist Historical Society. He was active in the Denver Council of Churches, and the Denver Ministerial Alliance, and served a term as President of each organization.

Lowell's quiet way of helping many people in their times of extreme personal crisis extends over many years, and many of his former friends continued to come to him for pastoral counsel years later. This is exemplified by a story which appeared in the *Denver Post*, June 1966. It was entitled: "Our Town: Second Thoughts of a PR Man."

"This is a story about two persons in our town. One is a minister — a sincere man of God who doesn't rant and rave about religion, but chooses to put his immense faith to work in quietly helping other persons. The other is a public relations man — a loud, gung-ho guy with a passion for words and work.

"The two met about twenty years ago in our town, when the public relations man and his girl decided to marry. They needed a church and a minister, and ended up standing before our minister friend in East Denver.

"The gung-ho guy — let's call him Fred — wasn't much of a church-goer. He found his way to a pew occasionally, though, and a speaking acquaintance with the minister developed.

"Then, tragedy struck.

"Fred's wife became seriously ill. It was more mental than physical, and the minister quietly volunteered his help. For weeks, he carved hours from his days to talk with Fred's wife. Eventually, his therapy was successful.

"Fred was amazed that a man he knew so slightly would give up so much of his time to do so much for him and his wife.

"That's all right," the minister said, "Call me any time."

"Fred still didn't go to church regularly but, as the years passed, he twice called the minister for personal help. Each time, the minister came through for him. Thursday afternoon Fred's phone rang. It was the minister calling.

"His church was entering an important anniversary year and the minister needed a history of the church written for distribution to his congregation. He would supply all the facts, if Fred would put them together in story form. Could he do it?

"Gee, Fred was sorry. But he had clients running out of his ears, and besides, he was moonlighting at home every night on a book and he had other stories to write and . . . well . . . he simply didn't have the time to devote to a church history. He could recommend someone who would do the writing, though. Wouldn't charge much either.

"The minister thanked Fred and hung up. After a while, he went home. He hadn't been there long when his phone rang. It was Fred.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I was driving home and got stuck at a light on South Colorado Blvd. when it hit me."

"When can we get together to talk about this church history I'm going to write?"

The minister in this story happened to have been Lowell Swan, during his ministry at Warren Church and as President of The Iliff School of Theology. The "Fred" of the story still writes for the **Denver Post**, and has continued his close contact with Lowell's ministry. He kindly gave his permission that we might quote his article in this tribute to his friend. The 'church history' and 'important anniversary year' refer to the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of The Iliff School of Theology (1967), and the interesting article published at that time

which "Fred" wrote under the title: "Cattle Herds to Clergymen — The Thrilling Story of Iliff." For a period of time Lowell participated on the radio program "Religion in the News" with Canon Mayer of St. John's Cathedral. They were anxious to relate various religious developments to the larger Community, and to find religious relevance in otherwise "secular" happenings. Also, at Warren Church Lowell developed "Dial-a-Devotion." This religious message or prayer by telephone is thought to have been the first of its type in Denver. Lowell personally worked out the details with the Telephone Company, and either he or one of his student assistants recorded a new devotion each day.

Lowell Swan was not an "activist" minister, in the contemporary understanding of the term. He never took the lead in a march or a crusade "to be seen of men." However, in another sense he was very active, but preferred to be behind the scenes. For example, unknown to many men even in the organization, Lowell was behind the scenes working toward the time recently when Negroes were welcomed into his Kiwanis Club. This quiet manner often gave those who did not know him well the impression that he was not really concerned about the major social issues of the day. Lowell brought his quiet pastoral concern to his varied activities — a warm humanness which many more "activist" leaders have not been able to retain. He did not try to be all things to all people and all organizations. He was himself in intimate, individual, pastoral concern, and his parishioners and associates throughout the years sensed that he did this very well.

Civic Responsibility

Throughout his career Lowell had been active in many civic groups because he was concerned about people wherever they were. He served as President of the Legal Aid Society and was a member of the Mental Health Association. He was also active in orga-

nizations such as Red Cross, Booth Memorial Hospital, Child Welfare, Infantile Paralysis, Alcoholism, and the Ben Franklin Club. As a member of Kiwanis, he was elected Vice President for 1969. One of the projects of this organization was to help the Salvation Army collect its funds at the Christmas season. Lowell regularly took his place in Salvation Army uniform on a downtown street corner ringing the bell along with many others. One of his fellow ministerial members of Kiwanis expressed his feelings before the Club after having known Lowell for many years. Richard E. West said: "He was better known than all but the top political leaders and known and respected by almost all of them; but also known and loved by many, many lonely unknown people . . . He always remained a pastor, even to his students . . . One of the busiest of our men, he never gave the impression of hurry. He always had time to listen to even the most trivial of problems and give courteous and serious answer. . . . Though he walked among the great people of our city and nation, he was as humble and unassuming as any man I have known . . . His sense of humor was a glorious one, not depending on stories but on his natural outlook on life. In a day when machines replace men and men become machines, he reversed the trend insisting, like the Master he followed, that every person is important and endowed with an immortal soul. . . . In the personal faith of this great man we have lost, each of us has gained. We are a little better, a little more concerned, a little more involved. His wonderful personal family has been extended to include us."

Lowell was active in the Masonic Consistory, El Jebel Shrine, Knights Templars and with his wife, Katherine, in the Order of Eastern Star. He was also a member of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Mr. Sheldon Steinhauer, Director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith stated: "Dr. Lowell Swan will be mourned by men

of good will, for in essence that is what he was — a man of good will and humanity. His interest and cooperation in the ecumenical movement in Denver helped to open wider doors that had been only slightly ajar. . . . Men of differing religions have as a result been enabled to reason with each other, to understand each other, and to respect and to appreciate each other. Those of us of Anti-Defamation League who had the privilege of working with him recognized his openness of spirit."

In addition, Lowell was a member of the White House Conference of Children, appointed by the Governor. This was only one of his many activities concerning youth and children. The Mile High United Fund, with whom Lowell had worked for many years, expressed its concern at he annual meeting: "In the life of Lowell B. Swan we have seen the fulfillment of the command to love our neighbor; the expression of that great nobility of spirit of which mortal man is capable, but which so few achieve. . . . Through his deep sense of personal responsibility he made many fine contributions to the well-being of his beloved community. He was a magnificent human being, tireless in his devotion to the welfare of his fellow men."

A Historian

In his college days Lowell developed an interest in history and continued this interest in graduate school. He studied American history for his Master's degree at the University of Nebraska. His Th.D. thesis at The Iliff School of Theology was entitled "A History of Methodism in Colorado, 1863 - 1876" (1951). Dr. Rist, who directed this thesis, analyzed it thoroughly in his article, "Lowell Swan as a Historian."⁷

In addition to his thesis, Lowell wrote five articles on the history of early Methodism in the West. His first article was entitled "The Southern District,"⁸ which dealt with early work in Southern

⁷ *The Iliff Review*, Spring 1969.

⁸ *The Iliff Review*, Spring 1953.

Colorado. One of the major figures of that period was John L. Dyer who was appointed first to the circuit of "South Park," which included hiking over the mountains on "snowshoes" (short skis) carrying the gospel and the mail between two preaching places. Later he was Presiding Elder of the Southern District. Lowell's second article, "The B.T. Vincent Vignette," was given as a lecture for the Historical Society and later published.⁹ It concerns the contribution to Colorado Methodism of one of the early Presiding Elders. His third article appeared in conjunction with the Centennial celebration of Methodism in Colorado (1959). It is entitled "The Strange Case of O. P. McMains."¹⁰ This concerns an incident in the life of a minister who transferred to the Rocky Mountain Conference in 1865 and who served for eight years until he withdrew under pressure. In the 1870's he was involved in "law and order" problems in northern New Mexico where a Methodist minister was shot, several Mexican Roman Catholics (who had called Protestant ministers "heretics") were shot or hanged, and finally O.P. McMains was tried for the murder of one of the Mexicans. He was given a light sentence. For this unusual study, Lowell and Katherine Swan spent a period of time doing research in the Archives of the New Mexico Historical Society in Santa Fe where they used records of early missionaries in that Territory. Lowell's fourth article was written in honor of Dr. Rist's twenty-fifth year on The Iliff School of Theology faculty. It was entitled "Judge Elias F. Dyer: Martyred son of Father John L. Dyer."¹¹ The martyrdom took place in Granite, Colorado (near Buena Vista), while the father was an active minister in the Conference. The incident was a real-life "wild-west" — type situation in 1875 in the mountainous area where the law

officer was "tried" by the mob, and gunned down.

His fifth article had a more extensive history. When the Bicentennial of American Methodism was being planned for April, 1966, in Baltimore, Lowell was invited to prepare a historical paper representing some aspect of Western Methodist History. On that occasion the present writer heard him read and discuss his study entitled "Jason Lee wins the West for Methodism." This concerned the story of Jason Lee from his New England education to his various mission trips to Oregon. The Committee on the Bicentennial copyrighted and duplicated all nineteen lectures of that week.¹² But shortly after Lowell's death the editor of *The Iliff Review* felt that the lecture should have a further reading, and it was republished in *The Iliff Review*.¹³

Lowell was a long-time member and officer of the Colorado Methodist Historical Society. There he furthered his interest in history through planning anniversary celebrations and memorial plaques. The monument to John L. Dyer on Mosquito Pass (between Fairplay and Leadville) was due to Lowell's interest. The story was summarized by Dr. Rist in the article mentioned above. Mrs. Swan has several photographs to commemorate that windy day when they set the monument into its cement base. A Church in Fairplay, Colorado, was repaired through Lowell's leadership in the Methodist Historical Society. The log cabin structure had originally been used by John L. Dyer in Montgomery, but Father Dyer had it moved into Fairplay in 1867 to be used by the Methodists.¹⁴

In the summer of 1954 Lowell was invited to prepare four or five lectures for a high school Institute at the Pinecrest Camp. The present writer was an ad-

¹² Association of Methodist Historical Societies, *Forever Beginning*, 1766-1966 (Lake Junaluska, N.C.: 1967).

¹³ *The Iliff Review*, Spring 1969.

¹⁴ See Dr. Rist's article from *The Iliff Review*, Spring 1969, as noted above.

⁹ *The Iliff Review*, Winter 1955.

¹⁰ *The Iliff Review*, Winter 1959.

¹¹ *The Iliff Review*, Spring 1961.

visor for the Institute and a discussion leader among the youth following the major lectures. The heritage of Methodism, both national and regional, was presented in a very well-organized and challenging manner. The youth expressed increased interest in their own religious heritage which, of course, was not known to them before.

President of the Iliff School of Theology

After having been a student at The Iliff School of Theology on two different occasions, and having received two degrees there, Lowell Swan was the person the Board of Trustees chose to be President as of September, 1962. He knew the school well, and had worked previously with alumni and faculty on many occasions.

During the six and one-half years of Lowell's presidency many changes took place in the school. Some of them can be measured by the dollar sign such as significant increase in endowment, enlarged funds for Scholarships and Grants-in-Aid, and substantial salary increases for both faculty and staff. Other changes concern bricks and mortar. During his administration the new Schlessman Hall dormitory was constructed which virtually doubled the living accommodations for students. The top floor of the Taylor Library was completed with book stacks and carrels, increasing the library facilities by one-half. No sooner were these changes completed than a major remodeling plan for the original Iliff building began to take shape. The ground floor, originally mostly unfinished and little-used, was finished and all administrative offices were moved to that centralized location. A new bookstore and several new offices were also a part of the plan. Then the top floor was renovated to include a total of nine faculty offices and a reception room for secretaries. Finally, the top and bottom floors were connected by a much-used elevator. All four floors of the building, constructed in 1892-93, are now being used to capacity as never before in the history of the school.

He also considered an increase in faculty and administrative personnel important. Lowell arranged for a full-time director of Field Work, which had never been a part of the school's program of supervision for students in on-the-job training in churches or other settings. This person became the liaison between the school and several neighboring Annual Conferences. Also, a full-time program of student counseling was established, and personality examinations were required for all students. Follow-up counseling is available to make each student most able to understand himself, and to cope with the many challenges and tensions he will meet in his later ministry. Furthermore, an office of Student Affairs was instituted, affording information on employment opportunities for students, contact with college students before they arrive at Iliff, and scholarship information when needed.

The previous ecumenical interests of Lowell Swan were continued as he became President. Almost immediately he began to talk with officials of the Roman Catholic diocese and of St. Thomas Seminary about closer cooperation. In the intervening few years there have been exchanges of professors across denominational lines, and many Roman Catholic students are now enrolled in regular courses at Iliff. Lowell was held in such esteem by many among the Roman Catholic leaders that when his son, David Lowell, was to be married in a Roman Catholic Church, his father was invited to be a participant in the joint Roman Catholic-Protestant service. It is believed this is the first such instance of such cooperation in the city of Denver. The ground work for this new understanding was certainly laid well by a President concerned about growth of individuals no matter what their religious creed might be.

More important than dollars, buildings and new courses, however, Lowell Swan was a pastor to his students. He regularly taught the course "Introduction to the Ministry" helping beginning stu-

dents to come to terms with the breadth of challenges which their ministry would bring to them. Thereafter he remembered the students on a first-name basis. The students responded and have often given their own testimony. For example, Ed Paup, a second year student at the time, reflected: "Dr. Swan was a pastor to us. He was one who provided this color in the grayness of the waves. He was this essence of wholeness on our campus. And he was one who helped provide for all of us a desire to enter into the ministry and related fields to work with people as he did with us. He is one who has provided answers to many of our questions and who has calmed our greatest fears."

As a busy President of The Iliff School of Theology, Dr. Swan remained warm-hearted and approachable to faculty and student alike. One student reported his experiences as he entered Iliff. After a few weeks he decided he would drop out of school. Lowell Swan overheard him and invited him into his office. The President urged the student to try it for another week — then another — then another. At the time of Lowell's death the student was nearing graduation. During one of the sharing sessions among faculty and students in the days of mourning and recollection, this student told of his experience and said: "Dr. Swan's name is going to be on my diploma even if I have to put it there myself." This student graduated with the class of 1969.

Warren Nistad, at the time a first-year student from Oregon, wrote a verse for the occasion:

"Lowell B. Swan"

"He was such an open man.

One sometimes became upset

because he could approve of so many things.

He always seemed to stand for my position and for my opponent's position.

He sorrowed for things that were not yet, and rejoiced for things that were.

A crystal bowl of candy was always on his desk, full and waiting for anyone.

He was soft-spoken with a soft smile, understanding, caring, honest, intelligent, a good pastor, a good president, a good friend.

He always seemed to be traveling, sharing his warmth, strength, and intense desire for unity with others.

He really understood the Christian faith, in a way which made him want to know others, to examine the gifts given them by God.

I never heard him criticize anyone; he knew the faults of individuals, but spoke only of their good points to them and to others.

He had a shoulder worn smooth with our worries and concerns.

Let us share hands and hearts and minds, attempting to win the battles that no one beautiful human being can win alone.

Let us also celebrate the battles which he did win; may they never be lost."

As President of the School, Lowell was our representative to the Association of the United Methodist Theological Schools. At the time of his death he was on the Executive Committee of that body. This organization adopted a resolution, including the following: "The quiet but assuring voice of this beloved pastor and educator has been silenced, but not stilled. What he said as he counseled countless numbers of people, young and old, will remain in their lives, not only as treasured memories, but for comfort, for guidance and for challenge. Great honors and much recognition came to him in tribute to his skill as a leader and administrator. These he truly deserved, but never sought. He deeply cherished them, but nothing pleased him as much as when some person, of whatever age, rich or poor, called him friend."

The secretaries at the school remember Lowell's concern for them as much as for the students and faculty. Especially they remember the last afternoon Lowell spent in Denver. For several months the faculty had been preparing

an extensive self-analysis in preparation for a visit from officials of the American Association of Theological Schools. Finally, after much discussion and many revisions, the faculty had its report completed, and turned it over to the secretaries when the deadline was fast approaching. They had all worked hard to mimeograph the 170-page report — 100 copies!! It was completed within a day or two of Lowell's planned trip to California.

On Wednesday there was much activity around the business offices. The meaning of this was unknown to most of the staff. Tom Franks had brought many large packages and filled the refrigerator to capacity. Finally, early in the afternoon it was announced that a "party" was beginning. Now, among the staff parties are common — for birthdays, anniversaries, or other special occasions. This was a party for secretaries, as Lowell said, "for finishing up the report to the AATS." He not only shared in the party but presented each secretary with a beautiful blue and white corsage of carnations — Iliff's school colors. All enjoyed sharing in the fun with him. Even the business manager, soon to leave for a winter vacation, was presented with a gift appropriate for the occasion. After these festivities Lowell put on his overcoat and picked up his hat. As he went out the door he waved, "Well, I shall see you on Monday," and prepared for his trip to California that evening. While none of the staff saw him after that, each remembers the kindness and gentleness that he left behind.

Concluding Reflection.

There is so much about a personality which cannot be captured in ink and paper: a warmth, a humanness, a lively interest in friends, in aspirations, and achievements, and plans for the future. Each person who knew Lowell Swan will add many of his own recollections to these collected here. Surely each of us was influenced by him in or own way, and each of us will be a better

person for having walked the path of life with him for a little way.

In one of the last incidents to be reported only forty-eight hours before his plane went down, Dr. Swan's personal concern for both young and old was related by Dr. Potthoff. "Lowell Swan's influence is on so many lives, and on so many causes. He touched persons one by one, day after day, and the circle of those he touched kept growing. . . . Last Thursday night, following a session of the meeting we were attending in Claremont, California, Dr. Swan and I went out for a cup of coffee. In the restaurant where we were the tables were close together. On one side was an elderly couple from Minnesota, enjoying a long-anticipated vacation in California. . . . On the other side were some young people just returning from a party. In almost no time, Dr. Swan was talking both to the old and to the young, drawing the group together. We had a wonderful time. His capacity for friendship reached across the lines of age, race and creed. In the varied groups in which he moved, he was a bridge-builder, and because of this we have a better community."

Each of us on the faculty participated in, or attended, one or more of the several memorial services which were held in the last days of January. One memorial service at St. Thomas Seminary included participation by Iliff personnel. A memorial service held during the Iliff Week of Lectures was attended by representatives from the Roman Catholic faculty of St. Thomas. In these and many others, Lowell's friends gathered to pay their last respects — young and old, rich and poor, those who had known him for a long time, and those who had known him only slightly. Concerning the service held at Trinity Methodist Church, the *Denver Post* writer to whom reference is made several pages above, gave his final tribute. Lowell Swan "was a listener, a counselor, a critic, a friend. This big man with a soft voice and eyes always had time for problems.

They were the problems of others, and it made no difference to him whether they were large or small. His interest was in persons. No pile of work was big enough to prevent him from trying to help someone — anyone. . . . He carried an excitement for life that few could match. Every day, every moment, breathed for him.”¹⁵ Dr. Clarence Snelling of the Iliff faculty, stated it symbolically. “Past and present are unified by the future. The man who would not be controlled by the past or engulfed by the momentariness of every present must live in expectancy, must be goal-oriented, purposive, ‘futuric’. In the

past, the life of Lowell Swan produced a model of a great pastor. In the present, the death of Lowell Swan has produced pain. In the future, the expectancy of Lowell Swan, his goal, his purpose, may produce many pastors from among those who share this hour.”

In a portion of a prayer on one of these memorial occasions Dr. Charles Milligan, of the Iliff faculty, expressed the feelings of all of us who knew Lowell Swan. “O God, we praise thee for his life. We bless thee for his service to thy church, and his friendship unto us. We render glory unto thee, that through such sharing as we have known, our faith has been deepened, our hope strengthened, our love lifted. Amen.”

¹⁵ *The Denver Post*, January 25, 1969

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