

Windsor Heights Summary...

My father, A. C. Schumacher, was devoted to Windsor Heights Lutheran Church. My earliest memories were of him being gone evenings, circa 1948. I would miss him and wonder where he was. And Mom would tell me he was at a meeting. I didn't know what a meeting was. But I came to not like meetings because they took Dad away from me. I don't like meetings to this day, although I've chaired many out of necessity in my career.

At that point, the mission congregation was over five years old and had established a foothold in the Des Moines landscape (read "mud"). The rented storefront services had filled to crowding, and a real church was built. There was, indeed, much to do and Dad did it, happily.

Windsor Heights Lutheran Church is the most beautiful edifice. It has served the congregation well, is a testament to those who believed in that fledgling enterprise. It was always a place of hope, and I suspect it remains so. Daddy put everything he had into the congregation. He would become a great religious and congregational leader, Bishop of the Southern Wisconsin District, but the seeds of the spirit which would take him to a richly deserved prominence were sown in that first mission. The key to it all, then and later, was his respect and appreciation for people, his ability to organize and lead. Always, as I watched him work over the years, there were wonderful people involved, the beloved laity. That was his gift. And he was always a good guy.

Mom, né Olivia Denef, was instrumental in this leadership. She was the daughter of a minister and seminary professor who taught Greek and Latin. In Windsor Heights, Dad certainly had times of challenge and disappointment, and Mom was always there for him. They were a team. She kept the home fires burning, of course, but she was also in large part the backbone of his efforts. She never told him what to do, to the best of my knowledge they never disagreed on much of anything. She supported him, was a sounding board and collaborator in his ministry.

A fond memory of mine was walking over to the church from the new parsonage early on Sunday mornings, on one-by-six boards to avoid the mud. Dad would put me in the back row of the balcony, and I'd watch him rehearse his sermon. He told me to make sure he could be heard, that he was speaking loudly enough, there having been no PA system back then. It was wonderful, those mornings. Made me feel important.

Dad was a marvelous preacher. His sermons were works of art. They hit home, met people where they lived, made common sense. They were always brief. He often said that if you can't get your message across in 10 minutes, you won't do any better in 20. As a grouping, a body, they are a part of me and everything I do. They were a guide to living well, decently. And they were a product of preparation, work, and practice.

Dad had wanted to be an attorney in college before he decided on the ministry. He was the first Wartburg College Student Body President, helped set up student government there. He was an outstanding community organizer. Mom won an "Oscar" at Wartburg for acting. She was one of the College's first music majors, was in the first choir. She was a music teacher in the tiny town of Orchard, Iowa – above Charles City – before marrying Dad and moving down to Des Moines.

Our parents gave me and my two younger brothers a very solid humanitarian foundation, provided a definite moral code. They shaped us well, and we three are very grateful. They were the best possible parents.

Brother Anthony graduated from the University of Wisconsin and later moved to St. Paul, Minnesota where he remains. He attended law school there. He worked in the Hennepin County (Minneapolis) District Court as a judicial officer for 33 years before retiring in 2018. He helped families. He has two adult children and five grandchildren.

Brother Jon will retire this winter from his service as a four-year member and past chair of the St. Paul Public School Board. He will also retire as 20-year executive director of a Community Foundation that provides grants for local non-profits, and from a parallel career as an actor, event producer, and corporate creative consultant. He has two married daughters, one of whom recently gave birth to the first grandson.

I've spent a career in music, writing and producing, began performing professionally in high school. I've also produced and directed a lot of film and video presentations, mostly for colleges and universities and most of those to assist in fund-raising efforts. I also have taught extensively, mostly in high schools and mostly English, almost always in schools where young people are disadvantaged. I have self-published a book called "A New Religion." Twice divorced, I have no children. I'll never retire.

All three of us have had, as an inseparable component of our professional efforts, a dedication to helping others. In our several initiatives, we are the sum total of our parents. We are all good guys. We believe they would be proud.

Windsor Heights Lutheran Church and A. C. Schumacher stumbled upon each other by accident, an assignment that came from a Dean at the Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque who decided to take a green kid freshly ordained and put him in that most challenging of situations, a mission congregation in a small suburb of Des Moines. Dad had never lived in a city before, much less worked in one. Yet both parties got a ruby. There are no accidents, I guess.

I treasure my memories of Windsor Heights and this Lutheran Church. My brothers and I thank the congregation for carrying on and for recognizing and celebrating its heritage. That time and place in large part made me what I am today, provided a wonderful foundation.

Onward,

Tim Schumacher