

THE MINISTER'S MEMOIR

By Rev. Edward Frederick Stauderman

(Handwritten in pencil and pen, evidently about 1950. Transcribed unedited by A.P.S. (Albert P. Stauderman))

My Father -- Frederick Jacob Stauderman

The earliest recollection of my father is of a night in 1876 when I was about 4 years of age. He picked me up from my bed in the middle of the night and clad only in my nightgown he put me on his shoulders, hurrying out of the house at 126 Throop Avenue, Brooklyn, and up to the next corner, which was Flushing Avenue, to let me see the soldiers pass by. It was the 20th Regiment, New York State Volunteers, returning from a 10 years occupation duty in the South after the Civil War. Father got his discharge after the war, but many of the men of the various regiments remained in the service for occupation duty. The scene of that summer night remains in my memory. Hundreds of men on foot and on horseback were trooping along like a tired army, glad to be home again. They were bound for the Armory on Marcy Avenue to be disbanded.

Father had been apprenticed to a "gilder" before his enlistment, and after his discharge he went into that line of business, making gold picture frames and such like. His place of business was on lower Broadway near Fourth Street in Brooklyn.

There he entered into a partnership with his younger brother, Louis, and operated a furniture store on Grand Street, Brooklyn. This partnership was dissolved in a few years and father bought a 3 story storefront house at 126 Throop Avenue where he operated a grocery store.

I was born at the Grand Street place and came as a little child to the Throop Avenue place, which was my best home, the home of my childhood and youth. The happiest memories of my childhood centered around this home.

Father was a true patriot and instilled a love of country into us children in a very realistic manner. On the roof of our home he erected a stout flagpole. On every notable occasion the flag was raised ceremoniously no matter how cold or hot or stormy the day, the flag was raised. I recall a Washington Birthday when the weather was zero. I was asked to go up with father to help with the flag raising. My finger tips were so cold that I wept with pain.

On Memorial Day (May 30) there were grand days in our home. Father donned his Grand Army uniform with the brass buttons in front. He bought flowery geranium plants -- one for each of us. He put a small American flag into each pot and put a row on top of a coal box at the curb. We children took our place with the plants.

The parade was to pass our door on its way to the cemetery. Soon the drums were heard in the distance. Our excitement ran high. Now the bands could be heard playing 'Marching through Georgia.' When father's Post No. 122 reached our door, father sprang smartly into the ranks and marched along. When its big truck with the flowers reached us, we were proud to hand the potted plants to the outstretched hands of the man. The parade went on its way and we felt that we had done our little bit in memory of the brave men who had answered the call to save the nation.

In later years father was exceedingly happy to have me as the Memorial Day speaker, addressing the great crowds in the Lutheran Cemetery at Middle Village.

Father was not a church-going man. In fact, he only came to church when one of us was to be confirmed. That, however, was not the reason for his absence from the church. We got the impression that he did not like the church, nor the ministry. But father was not an irreligious man. He was a truly religious man at heart and in his way of life. It was a real financial sacrifice for him to send all of us to the private church school for our entire elementary schooling. Maybe his love for the German language had something to do with this. If that had been the only reason, he could have sent us to a non-religious private school for at that time there were many such schools in Brooklyn where the German language was stressed. Many times in the later years of my life I have thanked God for my father's sacrifice, not only for the opportunity to learn the German language so well, but especially for the good sound religious foundation which was laid in our school days.

Father had a tender and sympathetic heart for people who came to his store pleading for food supplies on credit. Many of these were unworthy and took advantage of his kindness. When the food bills had run up too high, and no attempts were made to pay, he had to stop supplying them farther. Finally his losses along this line were so great that he was obliged to give up his grocery business. Father's heart was bigger than his business judgment.

When I announced to my father that I would go West to enter college and seminary to study for the ministry, my father was a greatly disappointed man. He must have had disappointing experiences with ministers in his youth. In his opinion, they were just a lot of hypocrites. He called them "pfaffen," (whatever that may mean). When I left home to go on my lonely way he said to me, "If you are going to be a Pfaff, you need not come into my house any more."

However, in his later years, when I convinced him that one could be a successful and respected minister without being a "pfaff," his attitude toward the church and its ministry changed greatly. He was now proud of his minister son, and soon enlisted the influence and services of his Grand Army unit Post No. 122 in the establishment of St. John Lutheran Church of Richmond Hill, which his minister son founded in 1900.

Father had a sanguine temperament. He became highly excited when two or three customers were in his store at the same time. He became flustered. I can see him rushing back into the ... room where our mother was busy with household activities and he called excitedly for someone to come out and help in the store. Yet, with all his excitable temperament, we never heard him use one harsh word. His attitude toward our mother was always tender, affectionate and respectful. When mother had to be away from home for any length of time, his longing for her was really touching. Mother had to go to Lake Mahopac for a few weeks with a very sick baby. When she returned she found an elaborate reception awaiting her. There were garlands and flowers all over the house. This relationship between our father and mother was a beautiful example for all of us. There never was heard a harsh or discordant word. Mother was too gentle and father was too respectful and considerate for anything like that.

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Edward Stauderman was born at 254 Grand Street in the old city of Brooklyn, N.Y., the son of Frederick J. Stauderman and his wife, Elizabeth, nee Kissel, on the 8th day of January, 1872.

His father was a veteran of the Civil War, a private in the 20th Regiment New York State Volunteers, better known as the Turner Regiment or Turner Rifles.

When he was a very young child, his father bought a house at 126 Throop Avenue, Brooklyn. Here he conducted a grocery store and they lived in two small rooms in the rear of the store.

His grandmother, Friedericka Stauderman, nee Licht, and his aunt Louisa Stauderman lived in a small 4 room apartment on the third floor of this house. There was a small garden space in the rear of the house, about 20 x 40 feet in size. Father kept a garden of flowers there and there was a high grape arbor. His arbor was covered each season by a pest of ugly brown caterpillars. Nothing was done about this pest and they devoured all the leaves each year. We suppose, nothing was known about insecticides to combat such an evil.

He had an older brother, Fred, and in after years other brothers and sisters came along. There was Frieda, and Philip, and Emil, and Betsy, and Victor, and Emily -- all together, we were eight children and had good times together. In the summer time we were out on the streets playing at the curb with sticks and marbles and tops. In the winter time we made a little snow hill in the back yard and had a good time tobogganing on our home made sled, a distance of about 15 or 20 feet.

When he was about 5 years of age, he went up to his grandmother's room each day and she taught him to read and write. To do his silent lessons, he was seated on the floor under the kitchen table. When he went to school at the age of 6 years he was already able to read and write quite well.

The school to which I, and all of my brothers and sisters, went was St. Mark's Lutheran Academy, a private parochial school connected with St. Mark's Lutheran Church on Evergreen Avenue near Jefferson Street. In our school yard we had athletic appliances such as the bock, the bars, the hurdles, etc., and we were lined up each day for a period of exercises.

In this school session we were instructed in both English and German and particular stress was laid on religious instruction with the memorizing of Luther's catechism, a complete study of outstanding Bible stories, and the memorizing and singing of hymns.

This kind of childhood education is very valuable and many times I have felt a sense of deepest gratitude to my parents and my teachers for laying such a worth-while foundation. Some of the teachers of my boyhood, as I recall them, were Mr. Malich, Mr. Richard von Niebelschutz, Mr. Stark, Mr. Bender, Mr. Essig, Miss Shute, Miss Bayley, Miss Frey, Mr. Zacharias.

We also went to summer school during the month of July. The attendance was much smaller then and the 8 classes were merged into 2 classes.

On one of those July days I was asked by the teacher to close the rolling doors after the opening session. It so happened that the teacher of the other class asked one of her boys to do the same. The result was that my left hand was caught between the doors and the tip of the third finger of my left hand was cut off just at the root of the finger nail. I must have fainted, for the teacher picked me up and carried me to a nearby drug store where the wound was cauterized and bandaged. My arm was put in a sling about my shoulder and I was asked to rest on a couch in the teacher's home. When school was dismissed, the teacher (Mr. Malich) took me home to explain to my parents what had happened. Was I proud as I walked through the streets with that arm in a sling and everybody looking at me or talking about me! At any rate, that is what I thought.

My father must have been proud of it too, for he kept that severed piece of my finger in a bottle with alcohol, and kept it on a shelf in his grocery store for many years!

I think I was a pretty good scholar and I think so for two reasons:

1. We were seated at school according to our percentage marks and I was always either first or second in the class. My competitor for first place was a boy by the name of Anthony Wills. It was always either one or the other of us up in first place.
2. We were given Awards of Merit for our school work. It was in the form of a picture card with our record written on it and was signed by the teacher. I had quite a bundle of these cards and kept them for many years. Perhaps they are still somewhere around the house.

The school was somewhat on the outskirts of that part of Brooklyn. I remember how we passed through open fields to get to school each day. I even remember herds of grazing cattle on the way. I also remember a district known as "Pickleville" where a dangerous element of rowdies lived and we were desperately afraid to go through there. There were terrific stone fights between different factions and sometimes between the rowdies and the police.

By the way, the police station was right around the corner from where we lived. They had a pump right outside the station. On summer nights we made frequent trips to that pump with our tin kettle in hand to get some cool drinking water. That was our summer treat.

There were many drunks in our section, both men and women. The policeman used to commandeer a peddler's wagon or a junkman's cart to transport helpless drunks to the "lock-up." We boys had the privilege to pull or push the truck to the station house, and then we would linger outside the barred windows, taunting the poor drunk, and sometimes getting a growl in reply. There were 6 beer saloons on our short block.

One of the great delights of those school days was to come home on a late December day and find our father's store window decorated with gilt and silvered nuts, candles, colored glass balls and streamers for Christmas. (See note 1)

School days were over for us when we were confirmed, which was at the age of 13. My pastor wanted me to continue in some higher school and put the matter up to my father. However, conditions were different then than they are nowadays. My father decided that it was high time for a boy to go out and earn a living at 13. I am glad that he did, for I shall never regret what I learned by being sent out on my own at the age of 13 years and 3 months.

So I began to look through the "Want Ads" in the morning paper and answered them by mail and in person. I was only a little fellow, undersized for my age. One morning I had to go over to Dye Street in New York, where a boy was wanted. When I reached the place, there was a mob of 50 or more boys in the hallway, making a great noise, yelling and carrying on. I was afraid and asked myself what to do. "Put on a bold front," I said to myself. "Act as if you belonged here and walk right up the stairs." So I did and walked in to find a tall, bearded young man at a desk. He was very friendly. It was J. W. Robertson, Dealer in Novelties.

"How much do you expect a week?" he asked. "I do not know," I answered.

“Would \$2.50 be all right?”

“Oh, yes sir,” I replied.

“Here is your first work,” he said as he handed me a large piece of cardboard lettered, “NO MORE BOYS WANTED.” Then he said, “Hang this downstairs on the wall.” I felt like Daniel going down into the lion’s den. I carried it down gingerly, holding it behind my back as long as possible. Then I quickly hung it on a nail and rushed up the stairs as quickly as my feet would carry me, followed by the yelling and hooting of the boys as they gradually dispersed. I had my first job.

A month later this fine young man suddenly died. I was taken in hand by his father, Dr. D. W. Robertson, who was superintendent of a Juvenile Guardian Society. He was a tall, broad-shouldered old man wearing a long white beard. He was quite blind and needed someone who could read his correspondence and write his letters. I remained with him for about two and a half years, learning much from my experience and association with this educated man.

Then I went downtown and secured a job with the manufacturing stationery firm of Arthur and Bonnell on Cedar Street, where I remained until my 18th year. In this business the opportunity came to me to find many good pamphlets and books, published or handled by the firm. To mention a few that come to my mind at this late date, I would say “The ABC of Money” by Andrew Carnegie; “The XYZ of Money,” by a banker; “Lights of Two Centuries” by Edward Everett Hale; a copy of a new history of the U.S. and best of all, a large old Websters Dictionary Encyclopedia.

The last-mentioned book was a real treasure house for me, for I sat up night after night paging through the big volume and getting a great deal of mixed-up knowledge of things.

Then I started going to the Brooklyn Evening High School for special courses. My thirst for knowledge was now thoroughly whetted. I wanted to be a teacher, a public speaker, a lecturer, a doctor of medicine -- I wanted to be something, I did not know what.

During all this time since my confirmation I was in regular attendance at church and became a Sunday School teacher. Among my closer friends were boys of my own age who had gone to church and to school with me - - Oswald Wendt, Jacob Smith, Henry Westlin, Charles Koller, Bill Abel, Killian Miller, Henry and Ernest Stauderman. We organized a “Youth Society” and I was made president.

We had debates. We gave concerts. We organized an orchestra. I played 1st violin. We had fencing, tug of war. We arranged walks every Sunday afternoon and every holiday. We walked many miles. We walked regularly during the summer from Broadway and Flushing Avenue all the way to Prospect Park Mall to hear the concert by the 23rd Regt. Band. We had bicycle runs to Coney Island and back. I rode a high-wheel Columbia bike.

I was now dissatisfied with my work at the manufacturing stationers. I was preparing to take the exam for admission to the Medical College, when something happened to change my plans completely.

I visited my pastor, Rev. A. E. Frey, to talk over my problems with him. He said in effect, "Of course you can serve God and your fellow man very well as a physician, but I have always hoped that you would want to become a pastor. You are now 18 years of age. It is not too late. Think it over."

Think it over I did. For 3 or 4 nights I could not sleep. I walked the floor and talked with myself in my simple way. I also talked with God. Then on the 4th day (there was no time to waste for the colleges had already been in session for several weeks) I took a determined stand for the ministry. I told my mother. She said, "Very well, in God's name." Then she added, "You had better talk this over with your father." When I told my father of my intentions, he was very much disturbed. "I don't like it," he said. "I am disgraced. I never expected one of my boys to do this to me. I don't want a preacher in my house."

In a few days my little carpet bag was packed. I took leave of my tearful family. For the first time in my life I was away from my parental home and for the first time on a railroad train! So inexperienced was I in the ways of the outside world, that I knew nothing of a sleeper, or of meals on the train, and so became quite car-sick and miserable. Finally I arrived at the capital city of Illinois, Springfield, where there was a college and seminary exclusively for the study of theology. College was a 2 year course and seminary 3 years. It was my desire to get through all of it quickly and get into the pulpit. In my mind were visions of eloquent sermons and stirring speeches and what not.

Arriving weak from lack of food and sleep, I was put into a sick-room because dormitories were overcrowded. I was told to be up and 6 and at chapel at 6:30. I slept like a baby. I was awakened by strong voices singing a hymn. Where was I? When I rubbed my eyes wide awake I realized that I had already broken the rules!

I appeared before the seminary dean, Dr. Pieper, for an interview. "College?"

"Oh no, I want to go right into the seminary," I said.

"But hold on," he said. "What has been your educational experience?"

I cited all my imagined accomplishments and my private studies, how I had picked up this and that by reading, by practice, by experience. Dr. Pieper was not much impressed. "Tell me the difference between who and whom," he demanded.

At the conclusion of the interview he advised me to enter the senior college class on probation to see if I could make it. It seems that I made it all right though it required a great big effort on my part. My desk lamp burned far into the night. Soon I joined the debating society where I could exercise my favorite sport of making speeches. (See Note 2)

My professors as I remember them gratefully to this day were

1. Old Prof. Simon, under whom I studied history and pedagogy. He was a master of the old school. When he lectured on history, he acted out dramatically all the major events. We saw the crowning of emperors. We fought great battles, etc. Simon must have been a disciple of Emerson (see his 'Essay on History'). So realistically did Simon act out the 30 Years War that I was able to repeat it almost word for word in a lecture sponsored by my youth society in Brooklyn during the summer vacation.
2. Young, natty Prof. Wessel. He was my favorite. He taught English and American literature and language. He and I got along famously with one another.

3. Prof. Streckfuss, a noble gentleman and scholar.
4. Prof. Herger, the dear old soul! His subjects were dry as old bones and he made them even dryer by his method. He taught catechetics, symbolics, polemics and all kindred subjects. I see him yet in spirit as he came into the lecture hall with half his library books under his arm. From these books he read and read, droning on and on, world without end. Many of his students fell asleep during his lectures and the others read novels. He was so near-sighted that he noticed none of this. But he was a gentle, kindly soul, and many times I went on preaching missions for him or with him to Taylorville, Worden and other places on the Illinois prairies.
5. Prof. Pieper, who taught homiletics and exegesis. To my mind he was a great and eloquent orator. When he spoke I would hang onto his words entranced. In my own mind I would say, I hope to be a speaker and preacher like that some day. But in my sophomore year he and I had an unfortunate falling out. He introduced a new rule that every Sophomore must go out for one year as a vicar, a sort of pastoral internship. I contended that was an infringement on our liberties. This should be made a voluntary matter and I refused to go. Consequently there was a strained relationship between us. The result was that at graduation all my classmates (34) received calls to parishes -- east, west, north, south -- and only the writer of these lines, who was the class president, received no call. He went back to the home in Brooklyn from which he had gone out 5 years before.

Immediately on his homecoming there was an urgent call for a supply preacher to go to a little Long Island village lamed Lindenhurst, to help out until a pastor could be found. Since no pastor was available at the time, I was asked to take over. I was overjoyed at the opportunity. After the service a special meeting was announced to take place on that same Sunday afternoon. I was asked to remain at the inn near the church.

The meeting was long and drawn out. It lasted until about 4 p.m. Then the people filed out of the church. A committee headed by the officers of the congregation came to me at the inn to inform me that I had been chosen pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church. They told me, too, how the decision was reached. It seems that their former pastor was a tall aristocratic gentleman who had been a cavalry officer in Europe before becoming a pastor. He owned a fine, showy riding horse which he rode proudly over the countryside. The simple village folk resented this, for no good reason. Perhaps they were envious. He was simply out of their class. There were grumblings throughout the congregation, followed by a genuine church fight. Then suddenly the pastor died.

At the above-mentioned meeting there was much discussion. Then a tall, lanky member from the bush arose and made a speech somewhat as follows: "Our congregation is small. We have only a little church. We do not need a big pastor. A little minister like the one we heard this morning will be just the right size for our church. So I move that we elect him."

That argument seemed to impress the people. They all said "Aye" and so I was elected. Now I was a pastor. My fondest dreams were realized.

I am fully aware now that it was not piety alone that moved me to become a pastor. It was vanity and an ambition to be somebody and to stand on a pulpit and to preach sermons and make speeches. I had to learn piety from the simple and trusting attitude of the simple people whom it was my privilege to serve -- not from theological books or from my professors of theology.

Within a year the congregation had grown strong and there was a spirit of unity. There was no other church of any kind within a radius of five miles. We had the entire village and surrounding countryside for our parish.

The parsonage next door to the church was a small 6 room house of two stories. It had no plumbing and no conveniences of any kind. Wind and weather came through ill-fitting doors and windows. But to me it was a palace. Here I brought my bride on the 16th day of June, 1897, one year after my installation. We came home from the wedding, which was solemnized in St. Mark's Church in Brooklyn, arriving in the village after midnight. To our great surprise, hundreds of the village people were lined up at the railroad station. They carried torches and lanterns. Headed by the village brass band they formed a triumphal procession and escorted the bride and groom to the parsonage. A few welcoming speeches were made by prominent citizens, and we were home.

That was the first year of a glorious ministry lasting just exactly 10 years to the day.

Some of the outstanding remembrances of that pastorate are:

A. All the men and boys were expected to sit on the left side of the church auditorium, and the women and girls on the right side. Although they were admonished in the wedding ceremony not to separate 'till death do us part,' yet each Sunday when they arrived at church they were parted like the biblical sheep from the goats. Before many moons had come and gone, we had tactfully changed this strange custom.

B. To supplement my meager salary of \$40 per month, I became a tutor in the homes of several well-to-do people, not members of our church. An advertisement in the weekly newspaper read, "E.S. graduate of American Theological Seminary will give private instruction in German language, conversation, reading, writing, etc. Address, Lindenhurst, Long Island."

At this time I had two bitter conflicts, which definitely changed the future course of my career.

In my youthful enthusiasm, I loved to make public speeches, especially on patriotic occasions. The G.A.R. of Brooklyn invited me on several occasions to deliver the Memorial Day address at the great Lutheran Cemetery program. The addresses were printed in full in some of the New York newspapers. To my great consternation, I soon received a letter of reprimand from the Missouri Synod's visitor (another name for Gestapo or Secret Police). He chided me for "seeking the applause of the world." He wrote that this was unworthy of a minister of the Gospel and warned me not to do this again. Rather angrily I challenged him. He cited me to appear before the official board of the synod. I felt like Luther called to appear at Worms. But I fought it out -- and won out. However this case caused me to feel estranged from the synod. Our views were distinctly not the same.

Next, I officiated at the funeral of a member of my brother's household after the pastor of another church body had officiated the night before. Again I received a letter of censure in which I was roundly taken to task for having practiced "pulpit fellowship," in a forbidden way. This was too much for me. There was now a definite break. A long and bitter controversy followed with the result that I severed my connections with that reactionary church body and joined the General Council of the Lutheran Church.

Now I set about to organize a new church, St. John's of Richmond Hill. I did this in my spare time during the week and in the summer months. My thought was that if it should become advisable for me to leave my Lindenhurst church on account of these disturbances, I will have a place in which to start afresh. However, this move was not found necessary. My people voted unanimously to back me in my stand and asked me to remain with them, which I did. (See Note 3)

At this time I wrote and published a book entitled, "He Whom Thou Lovest is Sick." It was a manual for the use of pastors and nurses and others whose duty it was to minister to the sick. This book was published by the Wartburg Publishing House of Chicago and was sold by dealers of religious literature all over the country.

For a year I held a position as a special teacher in the Lindenhurst High School department of languages and received 100% more than my church salary. That was a large financial help.

Here at Lindenhurst in 1898 our daughter, Louise Elizabeth, was born and in 1903 our son, Edward, was born.

We bought additional land and built an addition to the church.

We had a large 700-pound deep-toned bell cast, to ring in harmony with the small original bell. Both bells have been ringing and pealing in harmony since then until this day.

On our 5th anniversary, I was granted a month's leave of absence, and together with my faithful bride, took an extended voyage and trip through Louisiana and Texas, visiting with my classmate and college chum John G. Kuppler.

At this time I introduced services in English in our church. Up to this time such a thing was unheard of. In fact, the people of the community spoke chiefly in German even on the streets of the village. Now the church was always filled to overflowing at every English service.

A new organ, presented as a memorial to my predecessor, was installed by the Kilgen Organ Co. of St. Louis. The congregation had now become really up-to-date!

On my 10th anniversary in August, 1906, I preached my farewell sermon to go to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. I am happy to count among my intimate friends to this day the members of that church in Lindenhurst. That was my "first love" and it has remained my true love to this day.

So now in August 1906 we moved to Mt. Vernon. Like the Lindenhurst church some ten years before, so this St. Paul's Church had just passed through a time of strife and friction. Its church building was musty and mouldy. The members were discouraged and suspicious. The finances were poor. But we felt elated at being in a larger city with a large prospective population to work on. We were sure we could build up a goodsized and important church for this community, and we were not mistaken. Soon things began to hum. The people straightened up and took notice. In less than two years we had rebuilt the church building, making it new and up-to-date. Here we also had a larger, more modern parsonage of 9 rooms, a spacious cellar and a large attic. Here the children actually grew up and here they had the best fun of their lives. Never to be forgotten Christmas anticipations, with peeking under the rolling doors and being pelted with coal in the dark cellar; Easter egg hunts in the house and garden were among the high points. Dinners and festivals, sometimes with noted ecclesiastics as our guests, were quite frequent. Mother knew how to entertain, and how to prepare good dinners, and also how to serve them in style. Four years after our arrival another son was born into our family, Albert Philip, on Oct. 5, 1910.

Among the outstanding events in the church and parsonage were:

1. The above-mentioned rebuilding of the church in 1908.
2. The sensational robbery about which there are several newspaper clippings in my scrap book.
3. A second robbery and housebreaking while we were at church.
4. A third sneak-thief robbery when we were out for the afternoon.
5. The installation of the great "Herold Bell."
6. The installation of the Carnegie organ.
7. The purchase of additional property at 18 South 7th Avenue, followed by the moving of the parsonage and the building of a fine new parish hall.
8. I was elected president of the New York Conference when the convention was held in our own church. The duties of the presidency compelled me to travel about a great deal, visiting various congregations where there was trouble, or where a vacancy had to be filled, or where a church anniversary was being celebrated. It also caused me to have much correspondence and other work, which took up too much of my time and made me neglect the work of my own congregation. Therefore when my term expired I definitely and decidedly refused a re-election.

It was about the year 1929 when we started radio broadcasting in Westchester County under the auspices of the Lutheran Ministers Association of which I was then president. On every Thursday morning at 9 o'clock we had a devotional service. It was kept up faithfully with very few omissions for over 15 years on station WFAS in White Plains.

One of my most delightful and valuable functions in St. Paul's Church was the Adult Bible Class, which I led and taught on Wednesday evenings for about 20 years continuously. No member of that class ever gained more than I did myself. In teaching the Bible, I learned more than I could ever have learned in school, college, or seminary. That Bible Class was my real theological university.

After my first year as pastor of St. Paul's the congregation arranged a largely attended celebration of our 10th wedding anniversary and gifts for our home were presented. At my 5th anniversary as pastor in 1911, a great congregational festival was arranged and as a token of appreciation we were given a complete silver service of forks, spoons, knives, etc. At my 25th anniversary of ordination in 1921 at a special festival I was presented with a silver loving cup suitably inscribed. At our 25th wedding anniversary a great congregational church service was held. This was followed by a banquet in the social rooms and we were presented with a silver fruit dish. On my 35th anniversary I received as a gift a mahogany desk with desk chair and an office arm chair all of rich leather upholstery. (See Notes 4 & 5)

Of course there were several great anniversary celebrations in the Mt. Vernon church during my long ministry there and they were all highlights of my lively pastorate. There was a 50th anniversary in 1908, 60th in 1918, 70th in 1928, 75th in 1933, 80th in 1938 and 85th in 1943. The last event was at a time when I was no longer the pastor, but as pastor emeritus I was invited to be the anniversary preacher.

After a ministry of 35 years at St. Paul's I began to feel that I would serve the best interests of both the church and myself if I should retire. This thought in fact had been around in my mind since the tragic loss of my good, faithful Elizabeth, who died suddenly in 1936, leaving me stunned in deepest grief.

To prepare for my retirement in a financial way, and that I would not be a burden to anyone, nor dependent on anyone for support, I entered upon various investment enterprises and became successful to the extent that I could build myself a home in the country and still have sufficient income to meet all my requirements. My house was built in Bedford Township, Westchester County, on a two-acre plot and I lived there contentedly as a gentleman farmer for about four years, when I sold the place profitably and bought a home in Crestwood, Yonkers, N.Y.

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THE MOST DRAMATIC EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE

My beloved wife, Elizabeth, spread her wings like a beautiful queen butterfly, just emerged from the cocoon. Then, leaving the body lying on clean white sheets, she lifted her wings, still damp and glistening with all the colors of the rainbow, and as the sun reflected its colors on the wings she soared over the blue waters of the lake and into Paradise. It happened this way

Jan. 8, 1936. It was after midnight now. It had been a happy day and evening. The last of my birthday guests had departed. She and I were alone. We were tired and ready to retire. She said, "I don't feel a bit sleepy. What do you say? Shall we straighten up everything? Then I can rest longer in the morning."

"Then we shall," I said. During the night she felt ill and restless. In the early morning of the 9th I arose early for there was much work to be done, both at my desk and on pastoral calls. I telephoned our good doctor daughter and she advised that her mother remain in bed for all day for a good rest.

The 9th of January was a very stormy day, the cold rain beating against the window panes as it was tossed by the gale. Elizabeth was advised of her doctor's advice to remain in bed all day and take no food. She was glad to obey.

I had a busy day. Many chores had to be done for the week and I was in and out of the house many times. Each time at home I went quietly upstairs for a brief visit and found her to be comfortable and at ease -- just resting.

At 5 p.m. I came in to stay. My work for the day was finished. Putting off my rainsoaked coat, I went up again to her room and found her sitting up in bed, propped up by a pillow. Seated on the edge of the bed, we chatted about the events of the day. The rain had stopped and all was quiet. She said, "No. Make no tea for me. I'll just take nothing today, as the doctor said."

"But," she added, "You go down and fix a little supper for yourself. You will find this on the top shelf of the refrigerator and that on the lower shelf."

“Very well, I said. “I will come up later to say goodnight.”

I turned the lights low and tiptoed downstairs to fix a simple meal and clear away the dishes. Not a sound was to be heard in the big house. Very quietly I went up again and into the very dimly-lit room. Knowing how she often started up from sleep at the slightest sound of a creaking floor board, I just stood in the doorway and looked at her. She had slipped down from her pillow and seemed fast asleep. Her left arm was upraised, resting on the elbow. Her fingers were curved. How sound and deep was her sleep! But how could she hold that arm up so long? Very quietly and slowly, so as not to wake her abruptly, I made my way over to her side and just touched that upraised hand. It was hard and cold like marble! Good Lord! She must have fallen asleep at the moment when I went down to make supper. No, it cannot be! Dazed and troubled, I slipped down to the telephone to call Dr. Louise. “Come, please, something has happened to Mother. I do not know what it is.”

I stood at the door waiting, waiting, waiting -- afraid, trembling and lost. Where was my composure with which I had comforted so many others in like circumstance?

In a few minutes Dr. Louise was at the door. We went up together quickly, one supporting the other. Louise lifted up her mother's body, holding it in her arms and massaging her arms and back, vainly calling her name. She was not the composed doctor now. She was only the daughter -- the only daughter her dear mother had -- and what a daughter!

I took Louise by the arms and led her quietly away. Soon others came to take over. What happened, however, I do not know. I have not the slightest recollection of things after that. I was changed. Completely changed. It was the most dramatic moment in my life.

== Edward Stauderman

A FEW NOTES FROM THE TRANSCRIBER (Albert P. Stauderman)

1. Christmas must have been frugal with 8 children and school expenses! Dad often told the story of the hatchet, which he desired very much. He got it for Christmas (and maybe chopped at the wrong things) but it disappeared shortly afterward. He was heartbroken at the loss, but he got the hatchet back the next Christmas -- the same hatchet.
2. Not all time at Springfield was spent in study, naturally. There are vague tales of being headwaiter in the refectory, of the Hong King Orchestra and of the dramatic skits put on by “Shakespeare” and company “A little dummheit now and then is relished by the best of men.”
3. Townspeople in Lindenhurst were strongly supportive of their young pastor. When the blackfrocked investigating committee came to the village, they insisted on meeting in the church, not the parsonage. A pickle farmer blocked them, asserting, “In our church wird nicht gefight!” In the parsonage, the committee was uncomfortable and was quickly sent packing.

4. Large Italian immigration came³ to Mr. Vernon about 1919, right after World War I. Jasper Palmer, principal of the Washington School #1 which I attended, persuaded Dad to head a new program called a "Home and School Association," forerunner to the later PTA, to bring the Italian mothers to the school to learn of American manners and hygiene. Unfortunately, most of them spoke only Italian. Dad, however, brushed up on the Italian language whenever he could, even taking tutoring from an Italian doctor who lived nearby.

5. Dad was at first uncomfortable with new inventions like the telephone and the auto. As I recall, he never sat down while phoning and always kept his conversation to the very minimum. Our first cars were a Dodge, Studebaker and Willys-Knight and he drove well but never enjoyed it. When Mother essayed to drive, he kept his hand on the doorlatch! But for a while, summer evening "spins" to Pelham Bay, City Island or later up the new Bronx River Parkway to White Plains were a great family outing.