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Bishop James C. Baker

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Illinois Wesleyan University

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[Wire recording made of a speech by Bishop James C. Baker April 1949 at a Los Angeles alumni meeting. Bishop James C. Baker, bishop of the Methodist church in the southern California-Arizona area, was a member of the graduating class of 1898. The recording was made by Edward K. Waters '37 and converted to a digital format by Media Preserves, Summer 2009. Attempts were made by archives staff to verify spelling of names but some could not be confirmed. These names and some inaudible words are noted by marking the presumed word in brackets.]

Dr. Hubert Hodgens: But it's my pleasure and privilege to know Bishop Baker for a good many years. I was in his home back in Urbana during the days when he and Mrs. Baker were so instrumental in influencing the lives of student prayer and I happened to belong to the same conference to which he came. Bishop Baker was elected to the highest office the Methodist Church can convey back in 1928. Prior to that time, he founded, as Mr. Van Pelt has said, the Wesley Foundation Movement, and it's a real pleasure to call on Bishop Baker of the class of '98 of Chaddock, Chaddock being one of the forerunners of Wesleyan having been merged with Wesleyan after a time. And Bishop Baker, it's a real pleasure to have you with us tonight and to hear you at this time.

[Applause]

Bishop Baker: Mr. Chairman, Dr. Van Pelt, and dear friends, this is St. Patrick's Day and I suppose there ought to be something said about the Irish, but there's no time for a story in the five minutes that's allotted to me. But since we're all having once been Illinoisans now Californians, I may simply remind you that the Irishman said that every man loves his native land whether he was born there or not.

[Laughter]

Bishop Baker: I'm sure that if this record should ever get back to Illinois Wesleyan, we should want to send greetings to President Holmes and therefore I may be, in this moment, the mouthpiece for your greetings to him. He's doing a wonderful job there on the campus and stands in worthy succession to the men who have gone before. I have been asked to say just a word about Chaddock where I graduated. It was a school in Quincy, Illinois where one of the alumni of Wesleyan came from, whether there are other Quincy people I do not know. In all of these Western states and Midwestern states, we had schools in the earlier part of our history that rendered a very good service and then because it's such a difficult thing to continue college work, passed out of existence. Chaddock was one of them. I went down there with my father from Illinois Wesleyan where my father was related to Illinois Wesleyan as a teacher and in other ways, and graduated there. And then when Chaddock ceased to live as a college, as Hedding did over at Abingdon later, the diplomas and degrees of Chaddock were recognized by Illinois Wesleyan and so I came into the Illinois Wesleyan family, though twice since that time I have been made a member of the family through honorary degrees given to me. Anyhow I've always felt that I belonged to Illinois Wesleyan. My father was a member of the class of 1874. He lived in the home of this distinguished alumnus by my side, that is the home of the mother of Dr. Van Pelt, when he came up out of the army to take his

work at Illinois State University, the State Normal School at Normal. So I have a good many ties with this wonderful man. We've been privileged not only to hear but to look at tonight and to be blessed by his presence. My father graduated at Illinois State University, as did my mother. They found each other there. And then my father was not satisfied with the work which he had done academically, that is he was satisfied with it as far as it went, but he had been made a member of the teaching staff of Illinois State Normal and while he was there, he took additional work at Illinois Wesleyan and took three degrees there before he was through. As the years went on, he was later a trustee and then later was associated with the school. One of my memories as a youngster is of a bogus program, commencement program, that was prepared by the students of Illinois Wesleyan, and my father was quite a heavysset man and they called him the baby elephant of the faculty, and...[laughs].

[Laughter]

Bishop Baker: C.W. Green, Cally Whiskers Green [unsure of original spelling], who was the principal of the old preparatory school—they called Cally Whiskers “Bulldog” Green—and Graham, who was a Professor of Chemistry if I remember, “Hot Stuff” Bobby Graham, who went off half-cocked and didn't care what he said.

[Laughter]

Bishop Baker: And Elrod and—some of you remember Elrod [Morton J. Elrod, 1889/90 – 1896/97]—and of course Professor Ferguson [Wilbert Ferguson 1895/96 – 1943/44] I knew later and studied Greek with him—took special work with him. My brother and sister went to school at Illinois Wesleyan and my brother was a Phi Gam—I heard some Phi Gam remembrances around here a while ago—and my sister was a Kappa there. And I began my work in the old academy so I do not feel entirely a stranger when it comes to talking about Illinois Wesleyan although my degree was actually not taken within her halls. There are many, many things that flood over one when he begins to think of associations of that sort. I simply say that I am very glad indeed to have the privilege of being with this group and rejoicing in the remarkable work which Illinois Wesleyan has done across the years and she has great years of service still ahead of her.

[Applause, recording cuts out]