

Pacific Bible Institute Memories

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When I arrived at Pacific Bible Institute (PBI) as a freshman in Fall, 1955, the entire student population was about 50, so we were a rather close-knit group. I was offered a scholarship and majored in music. I found the classes stimulating and some of them rather difficult. This was also the year that the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary was started, with students from various denominations.

Some traditions at PBI were quite interesting. Dating, for example, was allowed only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The curfew was 11:00 PM on Friday and 10:30 PM on Saturday and Sunday and the doors were locked at those times. If a couple arrived after curfew, they had to ring a buzzer so the door monitor would let them in. If a couple wished to become engaged during the semester, they needed permission from the administration before they could make an announcement. PBI is where I met my future wife, Eva.

The women's dormitory was on the third floor of the school building and no men were allowed on the floor without the permission of the women's dean. Male students were asked to vacate the building by 7 PM during the week unless they had an evening class. The men's dormitory was located about two miles from the main campus.

The school building itself was located at 2149 Tuolumne Ave., near downtown Fresno, and had been designed by the same architect who designed Hearst Castle in San Simeon. It had a good swimming pool as well as an atrium in the center of the building where some fierce ping pong games were played. Faculty member Henry Harder was a strong competitor. The first and second floors housed the auditorium, kitchen, dining hall, faculty offices, library, laundry room and classrooms. There was a special room on the second floor known as the "gray room," a place where students could meet their "special" friends on the weekends.

PBI students ate together family style in the dining room. One student was assigned each week to give a short devotional before breakfast and offer prayers for meals at noon and dinner. A host and hostess were assigned to each table and they were responsible to bring the food. The meals were always adequate, but when the board met and ate in the dining room, the food was much bet-

ter and board members did not thus fully understand the students' complaints about the quality of what was being served. There were times when food fights happened as well other misbehaviors, but they would suddenly come to a halt when a faculty member entered the room. The school did try to teach the students manners and proper etiquette. Some learned more quickly than others.

All PBI students were given Christian Service assignments, such as holding evangelistic street meetings, ministering at the Rescue Mission, teaching "Jewels" classes for neighborhood children and/or teaching Sunday School in some of the small churches in the area. Each Sunday, about six of us assisted at an American Sunday School Union Chapel in Ahwanee. Several students taught Sunday school, one gave the sermon and I was responsible for providing music. Mrs. Ballard was the driving force for that chapel, and she cooked dinner for the PBI student volunteers. Each meal was like a Thanksgiving dinner. We were well cared for. We served there for two years and I have many pleasant memories of that time.

The primary purpose of PBI was to prepare men and women for ministry in the church, and a good number of the students from those years went into some sort of fulltime ministry. Some became pastors, missionaries, teachers, and lay leaders in their own churches. Others became presidents of Christian institutions.

At PBI we had chapel every day with compulsory attendance. There were many good speakers brought in for inspiration and instruction; some speakers focused on missions. We had Bible conferences and instruction for outreach. It was a good time to become acquainted with various mission organizations.

When the choir went on tour during the school year classes were cancelled because over half of the student body was in the choir; the rest had vacation. The purpose of the choir tours was to acquaint the churches of the district with the school and to create more support. At the end of the 1958 school year the choir left on a two-week tour to the Midwest: Oklahoma, Kansas, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. Imagine 30-plus students on the bus for two weeks! It was quite a time for all of us, and a good time to build relationships.

The tuition my first year at PBI was \$75 for one semester plus room and board. I needed to work, so I got a job in the library for a salary of 50 cents an hour. Later I got a job at Garden Nursery and was paid the big sum of 75 cents

an hour. After that I got a job as delivery driver for Proctor's Drug Store on Fresno Street for \$1.00 per hour. Fortunately, the cost of living was comparable to the wages.

The relationships built at PBI still flourish and I keep in touch with friends from that time. Some of them have graduated to be with the Lord after completing their work on earth. I am very thankful for the years I spent at PBI and for the blessings God has allowed me to enjoy over the years.

