

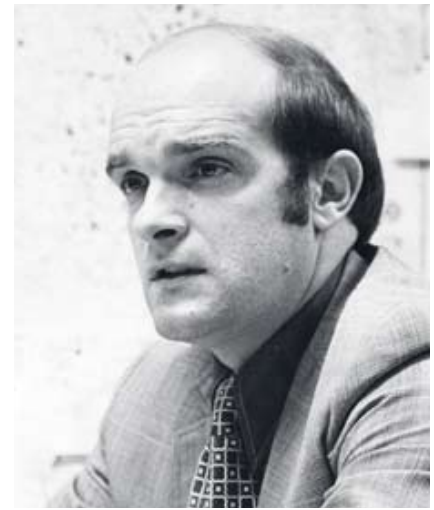
LIVING A LEGACY

A. James Fuller & Michael G. Cartwright



Lynn Youngblood '63

Some individuals shape the very institutions that shaped them, and one of the greatest examples of this reciprocal effect in the history of the University of Indianapolis is the life of Provost Emeritus Lynn R. Youngblood. Raised in a family with many connections to the college, he has been connected to the school for more than forty years as a student and administrator, and his achievements have helped define the institution. Throughout his career, he has lived a legacy of service and commitment and carried on the rich heritage of the institution. Today, even in his so-called “retirement,” Lynn actively works for the university, traveling and speaking across the country on its behalf, while also continuing to help develop the university’s partnership with Mar Elias Educational Institutions in Ibillin, Israel, a venture founded by Fr. Elias Chacour ’01. (See Youngblood’s first-person account of his experiences serving at Mar Elias University on pages 5 and 6) He is a living legacy whose lifetime of service continues to shape the identity of the school he loves so much.



The son of a United Brethren clergyman, Lynn was born in Muncie, Indiana, in 1941. Shortly after his birth, the Youngblood family moved to Lincolnville (Wabash County) and, then, to Terre Haute, as his father accepted new pastorates. His parents were both graduates of Indiana Central College, as were other members of both sides of his family, and this family legacy was continued when Lynn came to Indianapolis to attend the school in 1959. The young man found that the “school was more than what I expected,” as he enjoyed the freedom of college. “It was liberating” for him, as faculty members pushed him to think in different ways and in new directions. He remembers several in particular, including sociology professor Marvin Henricks and historian Fred Hill. Professor Hill, who was active in a local church, also taught New Testament courses and Lynn was a student in one of them. He had seen Hill teach Sunday School and speak in the church on several occasions, but the professor taught the subject in a very different way at the college. Lynn remembers that Hill “taught it in an open fashion,” that was a clear contrast to the unswerving faith he demonstrated in Sunday School. Such experiences helped the young student develop his own thinking and work out his own understanding of faith and intellectual matters. He was a math major who hoped to be a teacher one day. While many of his classmates experienced a religious calling at the college and switched their majors to become ministers or missionaries, Lynn

stuck with mathematics and education. His wit flashes as he jokes about his own calling: “mine was don’t be a preacher!”

Sure that he was not cut out for the ministry, he was still very aware of the influence of his father, Russell Youngblood. Indeed, he had seen first-hand his father’s change of thinking in regard to political and social matters when the elder Youngblood moved from being a Taft Republican to a Kennedy Democrat. The minister struggled with major issues, including the Vietnam War and Civil Rights, and shifted his political affiliation as he came to oppose the war and support Civil Rights. In part, Russell supported Civil Rights because of his connection to Africans and African-Americans in the church. The Evangelical United Brethren Church sent many missionaries to Africa and there were many African American members in the district in which he served.

Furthermore, Rev. Youngblood was a lifelong basketball fan and had been a classmate of Ray Crowe ’38, the legendary coach at Crispus Attucks High School. He watched Crowe fight segregation and racism. Banned from competing with white schools in the tournament until 1943, Crispus Attucks went on to win forty-five consecutive games and back-to-back state championships under Crowe and star player Oscar Robertson in 1955-56. Robertson, of course, went on to be a college and professional star and Crowe was soon promoted to athletic director at the now-famous high school. Like many other Americans, Lynn’s father saw equality be-

tween the races demonstrated in athletics long before it was popular in other arenas and he changed his politics to match his social views. He was also anti-war and quietly opposed the conflict in Vietnam. Russell’s views and actions impacted his son, who was developing his own way of thinking and coming to his own conclusions about the world.

After graduating from Indiana Central in 1963, Lynn taught for three years at Northwest High School. But, in 1966, he was invited back to the college by President I. Lynd Esch to serve as Director of Admissions. By that time he had completed a Master’s degree in education at Butler University. He held that job until 1970, when President Gene Sease made him Assistant to the President and Director of Development. In 1975, he earned his Ed.D. in higher education and was named Academic Dean in 1976, a position he held until 1981 when he was named Vice President, at a time when only one vice president existed in the university structure.

When new president Ben Lantz came on the scene in 1988, changes were made and a whole new system of administration was created. About 1990, the new structure was implemented, complete with deans and vice presidents. In the shuffle, it seemed that Lynn had been left out! Luckily, David Anderson, a professor in the history department, stood up in a meeting and asked, “What happens to Lynn?” The oversight was quickly corrected when Lynn Youngblood was named Senior Vice President, Provost



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and Chief Academic Officer. This somewhat awkward title reflected the nature of the position he held: Lynn was responsible for the academic side of the university and had to be flexible enough to serve in other areas when needed. He held this significant leadership position until his retirement in 2001.

In his many positions at the school, Lynn helped create the identity of the institution. As the administrator in charge of admissions, he helped define the nature of the student body, as he set standards and made decisions that brought young scholars to campus. This included such considerations as improving the quality of the college by setting high standards for admission, but also meant thinking about issues like racial, religious, ethnic, and regional diversity. As the official overseeing academic affairs, Lynn helped set the course for the future in regard to curriculum and the hiring of faculty. A strong supporter of the liberal arts, he recognized the need to balance a desire to meet social and economic trends with a commitment to a well-rounded education. In helping to choose the faculty, he was inclined toward agreement with the recommendations of the particular department, but also had to think of the long-term shape of the school and whether or not a candidate would fit into the mission of the college. The hiring of personnel was an important job and Lynn recognized that the person brought to work at the university might very well be on the campus for twenty or thirty years and would

be a part of the community responsible for educating thousands of students.

His administrative tasks required him to work closely with the president of the college. Lynn's career overlapped the tenures of four different presidents: I. Lynd Esch, Gene Sease, Ben Lantz, and Jerry Israel. This meant adjusting to meet new personalities and visions for the school as well as sometimes moving into new positions. One area where Lynn expressed difference with the first three presidents he worked with was in politics. Over the years, Indiana Central was stereotyped as being a "Republican" school. In part, this was due to the conservative nature of the Christian college, but it was mostly the result of the political affiliation of the presidents. As a political liberal, Lynn often disagreed with the presidents on political matters. In fact, Sease and Lantz often used his political stand as way to reach out to more liberal constituents and only half-jokingly referred to Lynn as "The Democrat." The political stereotype applied to the school became less meaningful as more liberal faculty came on board and was rendered obsolete when Jerry Israel became the first Democrat to lead the institution. Lynn's liberalism came sometimes into play in the local community. In the 1970s, he served as co-chair of the Community Desegregation Advisory Council, a local panel that implemented desegregation policies. This was a clear example of Lynn Youngblood carrying on his family's legacy,

as his work on behalf of Civil Rights followed the support for equality that his father had demonstrated.

Lynn remembers clearly the landmark changes that came to the school in the course of his career. One dramatic shift was brought about in 1968, when the Evangelical United Brethren merged with the Methodists to create the United Methodist Church. In a single stroke, Indiana Central lost its unique identity in the state of Indiana. It went from being the sole EUB college to being one of several United Methodist schools. Some people connected to the school worried that this would hurt the institution and that it would not be able to compete with DePauw and Evansville and other schools. Yet, at the same time, Lynn recalls that there was a sense that the merger brought a "step up" and that the college "had gained a sense of respect." Certainly the new affiliation made the school more appealing to large numbers of Methodist students who might not otherwise have heard of it. Another important period of change was the presidency of Gene Sease, a civic-minded educator who sought to use political connections and a wider image to bring expansion to Indiana Central. Many at the college worried that this would cause serious problems, but Lynn remembers that Sease "brought opportunity as well as fear" to the campus. The president's "movement toward the city brought in more people, more diversity," and resulted in a period of growth.

Throughout his years at the university, Lynn saw the motto "Education for Service"



being lived out on campus. He thinks that this was largely the result of the “commitment of the faculty” and that the spirit of service is “stronger now than ever” because it is “valued more now than ever.” This is partly due to the fact that “service is now a legitimate scholarly activity,” something that was not true in the past. Lynn also points to former President Israel’s intentional approach to making service an essential part of the school’s curriculum and community as being a reason for its importance. Historically, service had been an extension of the Christian ethics that the school promoted. It became the motto as a marketing ploy and there were later efforts to vigorously emphasize volunteerism in selling the university to prospective students. While there were debates and setbacks, Lynn is proud of the progress made and the way that service has become a central part of the school’s identity. One area that he remains interested in is the extension of the school’s international programs. The partnerships created in establishing branch campuses and shared programs of study in Greece, Cyprus, and Israel has allowed the university to attract a larger number of international students to the campus in Indianapolis. This affords students from other countries the chance to travel to and study in the United States while offering American students exposure to diverse populations and cultures as well as opportunities to study abroad. Developing these international relationships has required

taking great risks and Lynn praises the “courageous and entrepreneurial spirit” of those individuals who made it happen.

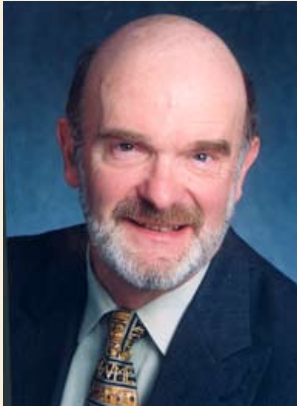
Youngblood has also made his own contribution to fostering international education at UIndy and beyond. In Nov. 1999 Youngblood invited the chairperson of the Philosophy and Religion Dept. to go with him on a trip to Israel sponsored by George St. Angelo’s Seminars International, Inc. The purpose of the visit was to learn more about the work of Fr. Elias Chacour at Mar Elias Educational Institutions (MEEI), a high school located in the region of the Galilee between Haifa and Nazareth, and to explore the possibility of a student-faculty exchange relationship. While there, Youngblood et al. learned that Fr. Chacour and the faculty of MEEI were interested in starting a Christian Arab university. From 2000 to 2003, the faculty at MEEI worked with their counterparts at UINDY to put together the curriculum that could be offered in Ibillin with accreditation through the North Central Accreditation Association. In the fall of 2003, MEEI received word that the Education Ministry of the Israeli government had approved their proposal and shortly thereafter students enrolled for classes. Since that time, several UINDY faculty have taught at MEEI, and faculty from the Ibillin campus have taught courses at UIndy at various times. In addition, over fifty students from Mar Elias studying at the Indianapolis campus during the summer of 2005.

Provost Emeritus Lynn Youngblood speaks for many Mar Elias supporters when he states, “Some of us dream that university graduates of Mar Elias/University of Indianapolis might some day be the bridge builders for permanent peace between two traditionally adversarial cultures. These students are truly unique in that they have a foot in both camps in that they are Arabs, hence related to the Muslim side of the conflict, but also Israeli citizens, thereby connected to the Jewish side. On top of this, they will have had a Christian education, in its broadest sense.” During the 2005-2006 academic year, Youngblood volunteered to teach at Mar Elias (see accompanying text for his first person account of that experience), thereby doing his part to provide educational opportunities for the Muslim, Christian, Druze and Jewish students in Ibillin.

Over his three decades of service at the University of Indianapolis, Lynn Youngblood helped shape the identity of the United Methodist-related school to which he dedicated his career. From his recruiting of students to his support for the liberal arts in the curriculum to his hiring of faculty members, he provided a sense of institutional memory that reminded the campus community of its history and its legacy. Personally, Lynn lived the legacy of his family, carrying on the commitment to service and social justice inherited from his father and others. In recognition of his many contributions to church-related higher education in the state of Indiana, in 2003 the South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church awarded Lynn Youngblood the Francis Asbury Award.

In his role as administrator, Lynn has lived the legacy of the school itself, as his long career spanned the years between the time when the college was a small, homogenous, Christian school to the era when it reached out, broadened its horizons, and became something new. And, with an intentional approach to change, Lynn Youngblood was more than just an observer of a nearly forgotten history; he was an active proponent of a legacy that he himself has embodied throughout his career and beyond.

From November 2005 through February 2006, Dr. Lynn Youngblood lived and worked at Mar Elias campus of the University of Indianapolis. During that time, Lynn wrote several newsletters about their experience. Lynn's January 2006 missive reflected on the role of Mar Elias as a beacon for peace in the Middle East.



January 28, 2006

Dear Friends of Mar Elias:

Another month has flown by since we last communicated with you. As usual, much has taken place, and Kay and I continue to learn a great deal...and hopefully share a great deal. It recently occurred to me that we've been here for more than 3 months now, we've added a few words to our Arabic vocabulary in addition to the limited number which we brought with us, but I still don't know the Arabic word for "please." We haven't needed it! But perhaps it's most symbolic that we learned the Arabic word for "thank you," the first day here (phonetically SHOW-KRAHN), and we use it constantly. The hospitality continues to overwhelm. Since we last wrote, we've been hosted in three Muslim households (one faculty home and two student homes) and continue to have our eyes opened to the warmth and hospitality, not to mention the strong sense of family which is ever present. I can't help but wonder how the typical Christian American might perceive things if they could have these same experiences.

One of the observations that we've picked up here is that of how celebratory Arabs are, whether it comes to shooting off fireworks for most any special occasion, or simply when greeting each other after a period of absence. The first day for the university to reopen after the Christmas/New Year's holiday break was Jan. 4. It seemed that it took forever for classes to resume on that day because of the process of greeting, renewal of friendships, rearranging of chairs at tables so that they could sit close to each other (a common matter, including Muslims sitting next to Christians). For a while, nothing mattered until hugs, kisses, and handshakes had their due.

New Year's Day was a bit unusual in that as I did my morning exercise walk on the campus, high above the village of Ibillin, it was absolutely quiet down below. Then it occurred to me...it's the only day of the year when Muslims, Christians, and Jews are "on the same page," so to speak. No one was on their way to work...no commerce was taking place, none of the Christians or Muslims in the village were preparing to open their shops, nor were Jews passing through town on their way to transact business. And we learned that for most locals, there's no such thing as New Year's Eve here...it's called St. Sylvester Day, and that's another story. Google St. Sylvester if you are curious.

Within the last 2 weeks we've hosted the first ever Board of Trustees for Mar Elias College. The Board consists of Arabs and Jews from Israel, Europeans, and Americans, all of whom are committed to addressing the tremendous needs of this fledgling institution. Also during that time frame, four of us from Mar Elias had the privilege of meeting with the elder states-



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man of Israel, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. He has promised to have his office take a good look at Mar Elias College as we attempt to establish MEC as part of the network of institutions in the Galilee, an area of particular interest and concern for Mr. Peres.

Another random thought to be shared pertains to a song that many of us have sung in church, where the chorus sings, “They will know we are Christians, by our love, by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.” Guess what? That doesn’t hold in this country. There’s plenty of love within all three of the Abrahamic religions that has come our way. The one way we do detect who are Christians is by the many necklaces worn by both male and female students, where the cross is the primary focus. But it isn’t unusual to see a girl wearing a cross necklace holding hands with a girl wearing the hajeeb (Muslim scarf). I’ve been aware of cross necklaces all of my life, but haven’t paid much notice. They are far more in evidence here, and worn perhaps as much by males as females. And we don’t sense that the wearing of them is so much an effort to stand out as it is to show pride in their faith in a nation that is called the Holy Land, but where only 1 ½% of the population is Christian.

And perhaps that’s a good transition to my next to last paragraph. One reason that Mar Elias exists is to provide hope to Christians here that there is a future for them in this land. In spite of the love we’ve felt from all religions in this place, we aren’t far from where there is great need for much more

reconciliation. Recently Kay and I were providing our own form of Sunday worship by listening to a CD by Chanticleer, and one of the cuts was the well known spiritual, “Amazing Grace.” I was reminded of my paternal grandfather, a southern Indiana coal miner, whose favorite hymn was “Amazing Grace.” Granddad was ill one day and stayed home from the mine, a day that there was an explosion that took some lives. My grandfather took that incident as a call from God to enter the ministry. He never served any big steeple churches to be sure. In fact, at one time he served 7 different churches on a two week rotation! And perhaps, in part, because of this tremendous task, he suffered a stroke and lost his sight. I never knew my grandfather when he was sighted, but I knew him as a blind man, who loved to sing “Amazing Grace,” and particularly the verse that includes the phrase, “I was blind, but now I see!” There seems to be a lot of blindness in this country. We’re personally all the more aware of it with the Palestinian elections just past. Our hope is that the beacon of Mar Elias will eventually help many “to see” the path to reconciliation.

Until the next time,
Best Regards,
Lynn

PHOTOGRAPHS

- A Lynn Youngblood speaking to a class of UIndy students on Smith Mall (ca. 2001); Photograph used with permission of the Publications and Media Relations office of the University of Indianapolis.
- B “Centralaires” singing group Feb. 1963, Lynn Youngblood is standing in the center of the back row: Photograph by David Brady. Photograph courtesy Frederick D. Hill Archives.
- C Lynn R. Youngblood, Ca. 1975-77: Courtesy Frederick D. Hill Archives
- D “Boys Quarter” (1961-62) of Indiana Central College: Top: Larry Thompson. Middle: Hugh Burns, Lynn Youngblood. Bottom: Phil Turley Photograph by David Brady. Photograph courtesy Frederick D. Hill Archives.
- E Lynn Youngblood (behind conductor) with singing group (ca. 1971); Marshall Chambers is standing next to Lynn. Photograph courtesy Frederick D. Hill Archives
- F “Centralaires” singing group 1962-63; Lynn Youngblood is standing in the center of the second row: Photograph by David Brady. Courtesy Frederick D. Hill Archives
- G Lynn Youngblood, professional photograph (2003) used with permission of the Publications and Media Relations office of the University of Indianapolis.
- H Lynn Youngblood with female student from Mar Elias campus (ca. 2005); photograph used with permission of the Publications and Media Relations office of the University of Indianapolis.