

The Serbin Bell Comes Out Into the Open Again

Introduction: There is plentiful history that can be found on internet sources regarding the Wends of Texas. The Wends were a Slavic people concentrated in East Germany. A Wendish group brought their church bell with them when they immigrated to the United States in 1854. These Wends settled in Serbin, Texas, hence the bell's name. The Wendish German inscription on the bell translates to "God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure shall to eternity endure."

The purpose of this writing is to share some history of the bell at the two Concordia campuses, past and present, in Austin, Texas where the bell currently resides. I attended Concordia High School and Junior College on Interstate 35 for six years in the 1950s. It was an all-boys boarding school until 1957 when the junior college became coed. I was a member of the senior class of 1958. When we were freshmen, the bell was in the foyer of Kilian Hall, the only dormitory on campus at the time. This is where my story begins.

The Story: The lonely bell sat in Kilian Hall for several years until President George Beto saw an opportunity to bring the bell out into the open in 1958. That's when things started to happen. An image of Kilian Hall follows. (I couldn't find an image of the bell in the foyer.)



Concordia's Kilian Hall dormitory on I-35 in Austin, circa 1954

The senior class of 1958 had 20 students, all boys. We were invincible and thought we could do anything. We planned a senior trip to Mardi Gras in New Orleans; however, we ran into a stumbling block: funding. We were unable to raise the cash necessary to get us to New Orleans and back to Austin, i.e., transportation and lodging expenses. Our efforts were diligent, but we came up short and had to abandon our plans because of insufficient funds. The following image is from our 1958 Concordia yearbook (during the planning phase).



Left to right: Doug Mierl, Tom Burroughs, Adam Cooper, Henry Randolph, Paul Proft

When Concordia President Beto found out we had some unused cash, about \$300 as best I recall, he approached me (class president) and asked if we would be willing to donate our unused funds to move the Serbin bell from the Kilian Hall foyer to outside Birkman Chapel. We agreed, and he got it done.



President George Beto



Serbin bell on concrete pedestal in front of Birkman Chapel, Concordia I-35

Fifty years later (2008), Concordia University opened in northwest Austin and the Serbin bell moved to its current location from Concordia on I-35. The bell has found a permanent resting place at Concordia's Welcome Center (Building A).



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Paul Proft, 31 Oct 2021
Senior Class, 1958