

Information on Elwin and Helen Farwell

Elwin Farwell was born in Michigan on May 1, 1919, and in August of 1942, he married Helen Irene Hill. Following his graduation from Michigan State University in 1943, with a degree in animal husbandry, Farwell served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He returned to Michigan State where he obtained a Master's Degree in animal husbandry. In 1955, the Farwells moved to California where Elwin studied theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and received higher education at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1959, Farwell received both his Bachelor of Divinity and Ed.D degrees. After a two-year pastorate in Andrew, Iowa, Farwell served as Academic Dean at California Lutheran University. In 1963, Elwin and Helen moved to Decorah, Iowa, where Elwin served as president of Luther College until 1981. During his tenure, enrollment at Luther College escalated from 1,300 students in 1961 to 2,000 in 1967 where it remained stable. Additionally, during Farwell's time as president, new majors were created including pre-professional majors; departments were expanded; a more diverse student body and faculty were encouraged; and Luther College became increasingly known as a liberal arts college of excellence. In 1985, Farwell served as interim president at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska, for several months. Since that time, he has been an active resident of Decorah, participating in many activities associated with Luther College and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Helen Farwell was born in Normal, Illinois, and graduated from the Michael Reese School of Nursing in Chicago in 1942. She was known as an indefatigable supporter of Luther College who successfully juggled "the competing demands of education, family life, and career." She and Elwin raised four children born between 1944 and 1958: Don, Kay, James and Judith. She studied at Michigan State University and assumed nursing positions at East Lansing, Michigan, and Richmond, Berkeley, and Thousand Oaks, California. During her time in Decorah, Helen helped organize the Faculty Women and Wives group and served as its advisor for eighteen years. She was also active with the Luther College Woman's Club, started the cultural and educational programs for spouses of Luther College regents, and served as President of the First Lutheran Church Women. She was a volunteer guide at the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, a member of the Decorah Nurses Organization and of the Winneshiek County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary. In 1984, Helen received a Distinguished Service Award from Luther College.