

A FASCINATING CLASSMATE

by Al Whitman

One of our most interesting classmates, blessed with many talents, was Goodrich Lowry, who left us in October '88.

When I was at Princeton, I hardly knew Goody. I saw him occasionally on the train commuting to Princeton, and exchanged "Hi there's" on campus. At that time he was retiring and modest and not well known by his classmates on campus. He came to Princeton from St. Paul's School, Concord, N. H. where, academically, he was consistently at or near the top of his class.

Eighteen years later, when our family moved to Minneapolis from Connecticut, I began to learn about the real Goodrich. He was a client of our advertising agency, and he had moved upwards in Minnesota's largest national bank at an unbelievably fast pace.

My wife and I soon got to know the Lowrys at social functions, and learned that he came from one of Minneapolis' first families. We were in the same bridge club, members of a fun Investment Club, went to the same church, and shared a great enthusiasm for Princeton. Goody was a very generous giver to our Class and to the college.

During World War II, Goody was the community leader who served as the head of Minneapolis' first Wartime Community Chest Drive. He was a recognized authority on nature, particularly on birds, wildflowers and nature photography, leading many highly informative and popular bird walks. Years later, this interest and knowledge of nature led him to found what today is known as the LOWRY NATURE CENTER, located some 25 miles west of the city. Goody originated the concept, chose the site, raised the money to buy it,



Lowry at his 50th reunion at St. Paul's School in June 1979.

built the buildings and then deeded the operation to the state, which, appropriately named it after him.

Goody had a particular talent for saying the right things in the right way. He was an excellent, patient researcher with a nose for facts. When he said he "thought" a statement was correct it invariably turned out to be 100% so. He knew how to write and enjoyed it, possessing a delicious sense of humor. His comments and stories brought continuous chuckles. With all these talents, it was only natural for Goody to want to write a book about his grandfather, who had been a business and

social leader in the Twin Cities. Goody's "STREETCAR MAN" was published in 1979. His grandfather was the head of the streetcar system throughout the Twin Cities, and a major stockholder. Like his grandson, he had a marvelous sense of humor and was a warm friendly person.

In business, too, Goody had become a howling success. He started in 1936 in a minor job in the Trust Department of Northwestern National Bank, the area's leading bank. In the early fifties he became its Executive Vice-president. In 1955 he was named President and Chief Executive Officer of the Northwest Bancorporation, his bank's holding company, the owner of 67 banks in 7 mid-western states. Goody held the #1 banking job in the area. He served on many boards, including Western Airlines and the National Audubon Society.

Goody invariably found ways to turn his creative ideas into realities. The Lowry Nature Center and the Norwest Growth Fund are two such examples. He helped originate an investment club of 30 members from 30 companies (named Succor, Inc.) and a bridge club of 16 suburban Wayzata couples (affectionately called the Gridge Boop). As the "Founding Father" of these clubs, Goody wrote highly amusing and factual histories for posterity.

Goody's Investment Club history was written for its 35th birthday for the 30 good friends who were members of Succor, Inc. It began: "Succor was born in the cabin of a modest cruiser on the waters of Lake Minnetonka on a balmy evening in August of 1946. Since the birth was premature there was no obstetrician in attendance, but Kenneth Owen, owner of the cruiser, accepted the responsibility and, using ice tongs instead of the more conventional forceps, delivered the baby in one piece...the little Succor arrived kicking and

screaming. The child's mother, courageous Harold Ward, thought that a small slug of Scotch whiskey would be soothing for the baby, and so the little Succor became accustomed to alcoholic beverages from, one might say, the very beginning.

"Since Succor had made it clear that here was no ordinary infant, it occurred to us almost at once that we were going to need all possible help in rearing it. We agreed, therefore, that each of us would recruit four friends to join us as foster parents...and that qualities conducive to conviviality should be given greater importance than such mundane virtues as judgement and intelligence...As to the possibility of making money there was no mention whatsoever. Harold Ward, with a mother's stubborn pride in her little bastard, insisted that the new corporation be named Succor, Inc., and on that inauspicious note, the cruiser was docked and the baby bundled ashore to face an uncertain future."

The following observations will sum up the true character of my friend, Goodrich Lowry— At no time in my long association with Goody did I ever hear him take credit for anything. When you thanked him for doing something or helping you, he would invariably say something like "On the contrary, if it hadn't been for you it wouldn't have worked." Goody loved a good time, particularly playing poker and bridge. One of his friends described him as a man with hollow legs, and since he was 6' 7", he could put most of us under the table.

So there's the story of a remarkable man who led a highly successful life—a wonderfully courteous gentleman of great modesty and tact—an innovator and a doer who made things happen—a man with a gentle sense of humor—an ardent Princetonian. A great personal friend whom everybody liked.

Goodrich Lowry, one helluva guy!