

A year at Morehead turned into half a century

Written this week by Richard Wilson for the Louisville Courier-Journal

MOREHEAD, Ky.—Warren C. Lappin, with a newly awarded degree from Transylvania College, came to this small Eastern Kentucky community 51 years ago planning to teach school for one year before deciding if he wanted to become a banker or lawyer.

That year ultimately began an educational career that spanned a half-century and saw Lappin become an admin-

istrative officer earlier this month, he had served under each of Morehead's seven presidents, had been the school's acting president twice and compiled a record of administrative tenure matched by few in the history of Kentucky public higher education.

A teacher and principal in two local schools before the college was opened in 1923, Lappin was first a part-time mathematics instructor there and in 1924 became the school's first baseball coach. Lappin won athletic letters in baseball and basketball at Transylvania, where he developed a life-long friendship with Albert C. Chandler, a teammate, who later was to become governor of Kentucky.

While on the surface, Lappin's serious demeanor and obtrusive scowl have given him a reputation for staidness or aloofness, these outward appearances, according to those persons who know him best, merely hide a personal sense of humor and keen appreciation and intense interest in the humor and folklore of Appalachia. In fact, this interest underlies one of his retirement goals—a compilation of Appalachian anecdotes.

An educator of the old school who believes today's students are not nearly as

serious about learning as those of previous generations, Lappin says this isn't entirely the fault of the students. In a lengthy interview last week he outlined some general views of university education.

"Too many students, he said, are inadequately prepared for college and probably shouldn't be there in the first place. The best way to overcome this problem, he said, is to provide better counseling at both the high school and college level. But once students get in college, he adds, many of them are not getting the kind of instruction they deserve.

"I'm pretty well convinced that a person who graduated 30 or 40 years ago could drop in on college classes today and find them still being taught the same way," Lappin said.

He attributes many of higher education's problems to rapid growth of colleges and universities and the lack of personal contact between students and faculty members. The decline of this personal contact, he said, has seriously eroded the quality of teaching. While he readily admits that many dedicated professors still primarily interested in classroom teaching, he insists a majority of today's faculty have sacrificed teaching quality to pursue often meaningless research.

He contends much of the fault for poor teaching rests with the nation's graduate schools and the way they prepare students for faculty careers. "We think just because a fellow has a doctor's degree, this automatically qualifies him to teach. That's nonsense," he says. Lappin believes that students planning college teaching careers should be required to practice teach, just as their counterparts preparing for grade or high school teaching posts are.

Lappin, who received his doctoral degree in education from Indiana University in 1941, also maintains that all graduate students planning academic careers should not be required to do highly specialized research for their degrees.

"I've seen the results of this. We get these young fellows here who then want to introduce a new course which is really a rehash of their thesis and that's the only thing they're interested in teaching. This is the main reason college catalogs just continue to multiply in size," Lappin said.

Morehead's dean, or chief academic officer, from 1940 to 1966, Lappin always has tried to teach at least one class per semester. He maintains this experience has enabled him to relate to problems of both faculty members and students and recommends the experience for other administrators. Otherwise, he contends, administrators become too isolated from the everyday academic environment.

Lappin admits that Morehead State

may have developed some programs too rapidly in recent years, but he maintains a pride in the institution's development and declines to discuss any specific shortcomings.

In reminiscing about his career, he says he does not regret having never left his planned one-year teaching stint for the world of banking or law. Why?

"The work's been interesting," he said.

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WARREN C. LAPPIN

70-year-old
vice president
winds up career



istrative mainstay in the 49-year history of the former normal school and teachers' college now known as Morehead State University. When the 70-year-old Lappin finally retired as MSU's academic

Sadie Sez . . .

Social Security

Hi folks! Summer and vacations are in full swing! I know you don't want to waste a precious minute of that hard-earned summer fun.

Thomas B. Thompson, manager of the Ashland social security office (you all know him - he's my boss), asked me to give you an important message.

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Bye for now, regards . . . Sadie