

Alumni Focus

Jake Ens Quick facts:

Years at TRBI and graduation date – Graduated April 1945

Were you ever married? – Married March 22, 1954 to May 27, 2001 when Marion my wife passed away with cancer. (Married 47 years)

Your Hometown – Gronlid, SK – later it was Nipawin, SK.

Interests or Hobbies – Going for walks

A good bible school memory – Testimony meetings, fellowship with students and staff

Favorite verse or passage – Romans 12:1-2

J: Jake, I recently re-read through “A Journey of Faith”, The NBI Story. In part, it was because I know you’re a graduate of TRBI and I wanted to re-acquaint myself with those earlier days in the history of NBC. What an impacting read.

How do find yourself thinking back of those days. Are the memories fading a bit, or do you still have quite a vivid imagination of some things?

Jake: Yes, the memories are fading some, but I do still have vivid imagination of some things.

J: In “Journey of Faith” it is recorded that you first came as a student to TRBI in 1940, and attended sporadically until finishing in 1948. Was there a reason your time at college was spread out over a number of years, instead of years in succession?

Jake: My first year at TRBI my dad paid my way to school. I had been working at home. The next year dad could not afford to pay my way, so I missed that year of school and went to work at a saw mill. By the time the next school year came around I went to Bethany Bible Insitute at Hepburn, SK for one school year. Besides my bible subjects I took German grammer since that was my background. But after that winter, I returned to continue at TRBI until I graduated. For one fall I went to Alberta to work the harvest, to earn more money to go back to bible school, in the little hamlet of Heath. This was about 15 miles from Wainwright, where the army base was. We could hear the guns when the wind was right. It was war time.

J: What were some of your favorite classes or instructors at that time, or ones that had a big impact on your life?

Jake: Some of my favorite classes were with Mr. Ted Paulson, when he taught Psalms. Also Homelitics with Mr. Mel Fredhund. His desk and his class work were very orderly.

I remember him embarrassing me one day when I was to speak in chapel. Before I spoke he said to me, “Jake, what are you going to give us today? Warmed up porridge, or something fresh?” I never found sermon making easy. Mr. Max Baxter was one teacher I appreciated very much. He once repeated something I had said, that I had only one gear and that was bull low. He said that gear was built to carry a load. I tried to carry that load through bible school, through my mission career and now in my retirement years. Mr. Bruce Wannop my principal probably had the biggest impact on my life. When I had hard questions to ask or difficult situations to deal with I would go to him. He gave me an answer that I was comfortable with. His direction made sense to me. One day while speaking to us, perhaps on ‘willingness’ or whatever it was, he said that on their farm they had a very willing team of horses – one was willing to do the work and the other was willing to let him! I had to work hard to make my grades. I did not have high school before coming to bible school.

J: If I remember correctly, “Journey of Faith” mentions you being quite involved in your last years at college doing DVBS clubs for kids with other TRBI students. Did you get to see some of those DVBS kids attend bible school later on?

Jake: Yes, I was involved with DVBS. Lee Snider and I went out on our bikes about ten miles north of Smeaton (SK) to an area called Jacquine Lake. There was a school that we could use for DVBS – but no place could be found for us to stay. So we were leaving the district not having found a place. I noted to Lee that there was a path heading into the bush, and maybe we should check that possibility out. So we followed the path and found a home where a widow lady lived with a family. When we told her our purpose for being in the district to have DVBS, and that we could find no place to stay, the lady said that we could stay at her house. Getting this was an answer to our need and we quickly made preparations and had the DVBS at the Jacquine Lake school. We were there for a number of weeks and had an attendance of 10 children every day. What I’m coming to is, years later I saw and recognized one of the girls from that DVBS as an adult. She was from the home we had stayed at. I asked her if she was still following the things we had taught her about. She said yes, and that DVBS was the best thing that ever happened to her. She said that she and her husband actually got saved in the 60’s and rededicated their lives to the Lord in the 80’s, but that the seed was sown in that VBS.

J: Later on you went as a missionary to the continent of Africa, right? Which country did you serve in and how long did you spend over there?

Jake: The country I served in was Liberia, and I spent about 9 years there, or two terms. First from 1952 to 1957, and then again from 1960 to 1964.

J: 1948 - that spring of your graduation was the first really major flood in the school's young history. It was also the beginning of the end for those years at the forks of the Carrot and Leather rivers due to the continued flooding. By the fall of 1958 the school relocated to its current site near Nipawin. How are some the ways you saw or remember God's leading and faithfulness through what must have been an incredibly stretching time for everyone who was involved in that decision?

Jake: I graduated in the spring of 1948 before the flood came, along with Lee Snider and his sister Blanche. I went to Africa in October 1952 and we returned in the fall of 1957 to Ontario, where my wife was from. We stayed there until March I think then came back to Saskatchewan. So I was not really a part of that move, but I think that was the best thing the school could have ever done. It must have been a very stretching time as you suggested, but God helped them through it.

J: There is a hymn written by A.B. Simpson that starts like this:

*The mercy of God is an ocean divine
A boundless and fathomless flood;
Launch out in the deep, out away from the shoreline,
And be lost in the fullness of God*

The theme given to your graduating class from TRBI in 1948 was "Launch Out". It's probably hard for you to believe it's been 60 years since that challenge was put forward by the junior class. Can you share with me your perspective on God's mercy today and our potential to continue discovering his fullness as we age?

Jake: This was a very stirring verse in that hymn. At my age, I just desire no other course but to keep looking for His fullest measure as I seek to obediently follow and walk in the light that He sheds on my way.

J: I cannot begin to share with you how much it means to me to see you year after year at NBC's alumni weekend in the fall. You have inspired me to follow your model as I continue to see my graduation date get further and further into my past. What keeps you coming back all these years later?

Jake: Well, maybe I do not really fit into the present age bracket and should stay away for that reason! But my heart is tied up with the school, and though there are not always many past students I can remember or relate to, there are also those who remember me – those who will come and visit and sit with me, or sit with me as we watch a game of indoor soccer or something. I still enjoy being with young people, and especially with those who love the Lord. Though the years get further past, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back".