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## Hidden in Plain Sight: Remembering the Upbeat

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# Hidden in Plain Sight: Remembering the Upbeat

## **Abstract**

“He would tell us we were like a fat lady on a stool hanging over!” According to Barbara Tuceling, Gettysburg College Class of 1970, that was what Professor Parker B. Wagnild would say to the Gettysburg College Choir when they did not stop singing on his cue. It was one of many sayings that Professor Wagnild, affectionately known as “Wags,” used with the Choir. He founded the College’s premiere vocal ensemble in 1935 and directed it for forty-one years. During his long tenure, he also founded the Music Department and earned the respect of scores of students. His impact on campus was so significant that he was memorialized in October of 2010 with a bronze statue outside of Schmucker Hall. Though many people dislike or are indifferent to the statue, Wagnild earned the right to be memorialized because of his founding of the Choir and the Music Department, the reputation and prestige of the Choir under his direction, and the impact he had on the lives of his students. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Parker B. Wagnild, Gettysburg College Choir, Schmucker Hall

*“Hidden in Plain Sight:  
Remembering the Upbeat”*

Sarah Hayes

“He would tell us we were like a fat lady on a stool hanging over!” According to Barbara Tuceling, Gettysburg College Class of 1970, that was what Professor Parker B. Wagnild would say to the Gettysburg College Choir when they did not stop singing on his cue.<sup>91</sup> It was one of many sayings that Professor Wagnild, affectionately known as “Wags,” used with the Choir. He founded the College’s premiere vocal ensemble in 1935 and directed it for forty-one years.<sup>92</sup> During his long tenure, he also founded the Music Department and earned the respect of scores of students. His impact on campus was so significant that he was memorialized in October of 2010 with a bronze statue outside of Schmucker Hall. Though many people dislike or are indifferent to the statue, Wagnild earned the right to be memorialized because of his founding of the Choir and the Music Department, the reputation and prestige of the Choir under his direction, and the impact he had on the lives of his students.

The statue that stands outside of Schmucker Hall pays tribute to Professor Wagnild’s accomplishments and portrays him as he would have appeared while conducting the Choir. His hands are positioned as if he is about to give the first beat in a measure. He wears a tuxedo with tails. Each side of the statue’s foundation is inscribed with one of his accomplishments with the date of its occurrence on the base. Walking counterclockwise around the statue, the sides read

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<sup>91</sup> Barbara Tuceling, email interview by author, September 20, 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Charles H. Glatfelter, *A Salutary Influence: Gettysburg College, 1832-1985* (Mechanicsburg, PA: W & M Printing, Inc., 1987), 2: 632.

“Rev. Dr. Parker B. Wagnild,” “1935 Founder of the Gettysburg College Choir,” “2010 With Loving Memories The Shagena and Wagnild families,” and “1946 Founder of the Gettysburg College Music Department.” Wagnild beckons many people into Schmucker Hall with a benevolent expression.

Of seven current Gettysburg College students interviewed about the statue, only those involved in College Choir knew of Wagnild and his contributions to the school. The opinions of those who were not knowledgeable ranged from vague interest to disagreement over whether a professor deserves such a memorial. Kevin Psolka-Green and Alan Heise, both current Choir members, knew exactly who Wagnild was and agreed that he absolutely deserved to be honored in such a unique way. For them, the statue had more meaning than much of the other art on campus.<sup>93</sup> Though not a member of the Choir, Amanda Jackiewicz, a junior Health Sciences and former Music major, had a vague idea who Wagnild was and also supported the statue.<sup>94</sup> Her involvement with the Music Department had allowed her to learn about him, whereas students outside of the Music Department had no idea who Wagnild was. Chelsea Endzel, a senior English and Political Science double major remarked, “It’s cool that he’s doing what he was known for,” after learning of the statue’s background. However, when asked if Wagnild deserved to have a statue she felt that it was unfair that other professors who have made significant contributions to campus have not been honored in this fashion. She felt that the statue added to campus.<sup>95</sup> This general acceptance of the statue might be turned into approval if the students of the College took the time to learn more about Wagnild and the impact he had on campus.

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<sup>93</sup> Alan Heise, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, October 3, 2011; Kevin Psolka-Green, interview by the author, Gettysburg, PA, October 3, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Amanda Jackiewicz, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, September 28, 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Chelsea Endzel, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, September 28, 2011.

Parker Wagnild was born on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1906 in Jackson, Minnesota. His family moved to Outlook, Saskatchewan, Canada while he was a young boy, but returned to Minnesota in 1921 to settle in Northfield.<sup>96</sup> One of Wagnild's earlier exposures to music was when his father, a Lutheran minister, took him and his brothers to churches where hymns were sung.<sup>97</sup> His love of singing grew in 1923 when he first heard the St. Olaf's College Choir. Determined to join, he enrolled in St. Olaf's following his graduation from high school, but failed to successfully audition for the choir until his sophomore year.<sup>98</sup> After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Music in 1930, he got a job as a choir director at a Lutheran church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. It was here that he met and fell in love with Helen Duerst. They were married on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1932 and moved to New York City, where Wagnild earned his Master's degree of Sacred Music.<sup>99</sup> The Wagnilds first came to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania when he began studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary.<sup>100</sup> Shortly after their move, the news of his talents reached the ears of those interested in starting choirs.

The College Choir began in a humble way that was not indicative of the renowned institution that it would become under Wagnild's direction. During his years at the Seminary, Wagnild started a choir at the request of the Seminary's president, Dr. John Aberly. It was

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<sup>96</sup> Sara Jane Sheffer, "The Amazing Story of Parker B. Wagnild," *The Mercury* 13, no. 3 (December 1940): 10.

<sup>97</sup> Signe Wagnild Shagena, email interview by author, September 24, 28 and October 2, 2011.

<sup>98</sup> Edward Palmer, "Tribute to Dr. Parker B. Wagnild at the Dedication of a Statue in His Honor," speech, October 2, 2010, Vertical File Wagnild, Prof. Parker B., Gettysburg College Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA.

<sup>99</sup> Shagena, email interview.

<sup>100</sup> Glatfelter, *A Salutory Influence*, 632.

Aberly's idea for Wagnild to propose the founding of a coed choir to Gettysburg College's Music Committee in 1935.<sup>101</sup> Met with enthusiastic approval, Wagnild called auditions in October, but while enough men came, hardly any girls tried out.<sup>102</sup> Not to be discouraged by their shyness, he went to the women's dorm and held auditions in the common room at 10:30 at night. The girls sang for him with their curlers and face masks on. Some sang well enough to be accepted into the first College Choir.<sup>103</sup> The Choir's first performance was on Christmas 1935 and in March of 1937, they embarked on their first tour, an event that would become an honored tradition at the College.<sup>104</sup> Initially fifty members, the Choir grew to around seventy at the time of Wagnild's retirement in 1976.<sup>105</sup> This growth can be credited to Wagnild's qualities as a director.

By all accounts Wagnild was a beloved, but demanding man who was a talented musician in his own right. Robert Zellner, Director of Bands and a professor in the Music Department for thirty years, said Wagnild was "always a gentleman."<sup>106</sup> Barbara Tuceling described him as "warm, loving and funny." His amiable nature, however, was tempered by an indomitable will. Norman Nunamaker, a music professor from 1963 to 1996, described him as "stubborn at times.

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<sup>101</sup> Parker B. Wagnild, letter to Charles Glatfelter, July 12, 1988, Vertical File Miller, Rev. Raymond Class of 1935, Gettysburg College Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA.

<sup>102</sup> Glatfelter, *A Salutory Influence*, 632; Sheffer, "The Amazing Story," 18.

<sup>103</sup> Sheffer, "The Amazing Story," 18.

<sup>104</sup> Glatfelter, *A Salutory Influence*, 632-633.

<sup>105</sup> "Final Concert by Wagnild in Christ Chapel on Sunday," *Gettysburg Times*, May 26, 1976, Accessed Vertical File Wagnild, Prof. Parker B., Gettysburg College Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA.

<sup>106</sup> Robert Zellner, telephone interview by author, September 23, 2011.

He wanted to do things his way. It was his way or the highway.”<sup>107</sup> Despite his toughness, it was Wagnild’s charisma, combined with his musicianship that made him such a successful director. According to Wagnild family lore, Wagnild was “a musician from the day he was born . . . . As a young man his life dream was to direct a college choir.”<sup>108</sup> He had perfect pitch and his ear was exceptionally good. Barbara Tuceling recalled that his sense of pitch was good enough to pinpoint exactly which seats needed to be fixed when something was not quite right during full rehearsal.<sup>109</sup> Through his musicianship, Wagnild was able to create a sound that became a trademark of the Choir.

Wagnild achieved the uniquely beautiful sound of the Choir through practice, emphasis on tone, and a distinctive conducting style. According to his daughter, Signe Wagnild Shagena, “Choir practices were held Monday through Friday for one hour each day. There was an additional hour each week for sectional rehearsals: Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and Basses. Also each member had to take voice lessons.”<sup>110</sup> This rigorous schedule made involvement in other extracurriculars difficult. Barbara Tuceling described it best when she said that, “I don't think Wags minded other activities, as long as they didn't interfere with choir!”<sup>111</sup> Choir was expected to be a top priority. The extra practice allowed choir members to develop their distinctive tone, known as the “St. Olaf’s sound.” Influenced by Wagnild’s alma mater, it emphasized the lower

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<sup>107</sup> Norman Nunamaker, telephone interview by author, September 26, 2011.

<sup>108</sup> Shagena, email interview.

<sup>109</sup> Tuceling, email interview.

<sup>110</sup> Shagena, email interview.

<sup>111</sup> Tuceling, email interview.

voices to create a dark, heavy, and dense sound.<sup>112</sup> Borrowing more of St. Olaf's method, Wagnild had a unique way of conducting the Choir. In most musical ensembles, a conductor will indicate the first beat in the measure by bringing the hand in a downward motion. Even if a musician gets lost, he or she will always know where the measure begins because the first, or down beat, is always indicated in that particular way. Wagnild, however, conducted by "throw[ing] the down beat up."<sup>113</sup> Choir members were so disciplined that they responded to Wagnild's every direction. Perfection was the ultimate goal.<sup>114</sup> "I can't even describe how precise and clear they were, like a machine," Michael Matsinko, a piano professor at the College for thirty years, recalled.<sup>115</sup> These techniques and styles were then applied to the Choir's signature musical selections.

In an effort to combine his Lutheran religion with his passion for music, Wagnild constructed the Choir's repertoire from sacred music that recalled his time at St. Olaf's. The songs that appeared most often in Choir concerts were "Beautiful Savoir" and "O Day Full of Grace" by F. Melius Christiansen and "Salvation is Created" by P. Tchesnokov. "Beautiful Savior" continues to be sung by the Choir under the direction of Dr. Robert Natter and "O Day Full of Grace" was sung in Wagnild's honor at his memorial service and at each Choir

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<sup>112</sup> Michael Matsinko, telephone interview by author, September 24, 2011.

<sup>113</sup> Matsinko, telephone interview. Matsinko attributed Wagnild's style to his time at St. Olaf's, but Joyce Elsner felt that he developed this trait on his own and doubted he picked it while in college. I have chosen to use Matsinko's perspective as he was a colleague and evidence suggests that Wagnild did his best to model the College Choir on the St. Olaf's model. Joyce Elsner, telephone interview by the author, September 27, 2011.

<sup>114</sup> Tuceling, email interview.

<sup>115</sup> Matsinko, telephone interview.

reunion.<sup>116</sup> Christiansen was a popular composer because of he was the conductor of the St. Olaf's Choir during Wagnild's time as a member in the 1920s.<sup>117</sup> The Choir displayed great variety within the genre of sacred music, singing in a number of styles, including spirituals, and in different languages.<sup>118</sup>

Wagnild's reputation as the Choir director became a stepping stone for his role in the creation of the Music Department. The movement to institute the department began with the donation of \$50,000 by the Gettysburg College Women's League in 1945. Wagnild was asked to be the founding chairperson in 1946 upon approval for the development of a Music Department by the College Board of Trustees.<sup>119</sup> In 1948, after two years of work, the department officially began operations with Wagnild as its only full time professor.<sup>120</sup> Under his direction, the department was able to grow into the institution it is today. With the financial help of the Women's League, classrooms and practice rooms were added to Brua Chapel to transform it into the College's performing arts center in 1958. Wagnild also oversaw the creation of the Bachelor of Arts in Music and Bachelor of Science in Music Education, crafting the curriculum to meet state requirements.<sup>121</sup> Joyce Elsner, a member of the very first Music Education class in 1958, developed a deep respect for him as Music Department Chair. Although she was never a member of the Choir, she recalled that "Everything I did was through him. I lived in that [Brua Chapel]

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<sup>116</sup> Shagena, email interview.

<sup>117</sup> Edward Palmer, email interview by author, September 21, 2011.

<sup>118</sup> Tuceling, email interview.

<sup>119</sup> Glatfelter, *A Salutory Influence*, 969; Signe Wagnild Shagena, telephone interview by the author, October 4, 2011.

<sup>120</sup> Office of the Dean of the College Information Card Parker B. Wagnild, Vertical File Wagnild, Prof. Parker B., Gettysburg College Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA; Shagena, telephone interview.

<sup>121</sup> Shagena, email interview.

building.” She currently spearheads many efforts to remember him on campus.<sup>122</sup> Under Wagnild, one of the Music Department’s most valuable recruiting tools was the College Choir, bringing its sound to venues all over Pennsylvania and beyond.

Word of the College Choir’s exceptional sound began to grow and the choir started to embark on tours that spread the name of Gettysburg College throughout the nation, and the world. What began as smaller trips to familiar places such as York and Harrisburg, became visits to some of the country’s largest cities such as New York and Chicago.<sup>123</sup> Soon the Choir was flying overseas, performing as only one of two American Choirs at the Congress of the Lutheran World Federation in Finland and at the International Layman’s Religious Festival in Germany in 1963. Dignitaries such as Indira Gandhi, President Richard Nixon, and Crown Prince Olaf of Norway asked the Choir to sing at important functions.<sup>124</sup> Venues such as the White House, US Embassies, and St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice heard their songs. Topping them all though was the World Tour in 1967. With stops in Japan, Thailand, Iran, Greece, and Austria, the Choir went around the world in 47 days and sang 27 concerts.<sup>125</sup> Lauded by newspapers such as the New York Times, the tours enhanced the reputation of both the Choir and the College.<sup>126</sup>

Through their tours and glowing national reviews, the Choir drew people to Gettysburg College, who would not otherwise have considered the school. Barbara Tuceling went so far as

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<sup>122</sup> Joyce Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>123</sup> Back of “Benedictus Qui Venit” LP Recording of the Gettysburg College Choir, 1974, Gettysburg College Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA.

<sup>124</sup> Office of the Dean of the College Information Card; Palmer, “Tribute to Dr. Parker B. Wagnild,” speech.

<sup>125</sup> Office of the Dean of the College Information Card.

<sup>126</sup> Matsinko, telephone interview.

to say “I think we probably carried the name of G-burg to more potential students than any other single activity, even the team sports.”<sup>127</sup> Edward Palmer, Class of 1960, said that he attended Gettysburg because of the Choir.<sup>128</sup> In a 2005 interview, Robert Zellner told Joseph Strausbaugh that he applied for a job at the College after attending a Choir concert. It was Wagnild who told him about an open position when Zellner approached to say how impressed he had been with the Choir’s performance.<sup>129</sup> Joyce Elsner agreed by saying that if many people “hadn’t heard the Choir in the churches and towns, they wouldn’t have even considered Gettysburg.”<sup>130</sup> It was the sound of the Choir that brought the College such good publicity, something that would not have been possible without the inspiration Wagnild gave his students.

Wagnild’s most important attribute was his ability to inspire his students to strive for the highest level of musical accomplishment. He cared deeply about his students, not just as members of his beloved Choir, but as individuals, special in their own way. By guiding them to find this uniqueness in themselves, they were able to produce excellent music.<sup>131</sup> Edward Palmer described how it felt when they sang just as the conductor wanted: “Through humor, dedication, and his depth of commitment and expertise, he instilled in us the desire to reach higher, to work harder. We wanted to do anything we could to ‘jar his grandmother’s preserves’ and to hear him

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<sup>127</sup> Tuceling, email interview.

<sup>128</sup> Palmer, email interview.

<sup>129</sup> Robert Zellner, interview by Joseph Strausbaugh, Gettysburg, PA, August 22, 200, History of Gettysburg College Oral Histories T-Z, Gettysburg College Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA.

<sup>130</sup> Joyce Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>131</sup> Palmer, “Tribute to Dr. Parker B. Wagnild,” speech.

quietly after we had just sung a piece beautifully say in his own classic way, ‘Gee Whiz.’”<sup>132</sup> As only the best teachers can, he showed them how good they could be. He genuinely cared about the songs the Choir was performing reading the lyrics of them during rehearsal, infusing them with meaning so that his students would be able to convey the essence of what they were singing more effectively.<sup>133</sup> His students knew how much having an excellent choir meant to him and did their best to impress and improve for him.

Not only did Wagnild inspire his students in the realm of music, he also touched their personal lives as well. When Barbara Tuceling’s mother became seriously ill, Wagnild and his wife Helen offered her a place in their home should she ever need one. They stayed in touch after her graduation and Wagnild helped officiate her wedding.<sup>134</sup> The fatherly role he played for Tuceling was shared by many others including Edward Palmer, who went to him for advice about a future career in music. Wagnild told him to make music his hobby instead of dealing with the difficulties of having music as a career. Palmer took his advice and now is the head of the Psychology Department at Davidson College, while still staying involved in musical activities.<sup>135</sup> As Joyce Elsner said, “If you knew him, you tried to exemplify his life. He was just such a different person. He had a very deep effect on your life.”<sup>136</sup> Not only did his students like him as a teacher, but they also saw him as a mentor and father figure, something not achieved by every educator.

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<sup>132</sup> Palmer, email interview.

<sup>133</sup> Tuceling, email interview.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Palmer, email interview.

<sup>136</sup> Joyce Elsner, telephone interview.

His student's love for Wagnild and his memory can be best seen in the money they have raised in his honor and the highly attended Choir reunions. Long before his retirement, alumni raised \$3,500 in 1960 to begin the "Wagnild Music Scholarship Fund" to provide financial aid to students in the music department. 125 alumni returned that year for the 25<sup>th</sup> reunion and those numbers continued to grow.<sup>137</sup> Upon his retirement in 1976, 325 former choir members sang at the farewell concert.<sup>138</sup> Under more somber circumstances in 1992, they sang at Wagnild's memorial service, which Barbara Tuceling described as, "one of the most difficult things I've ever done."<sup>139</sup> Today alumni are developing the Parker and Helen Wagnild Endowment Fund, a project begun in honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the choir. Their goal is to raise \$500,000 for future choir tours. They are currently at \$411,000 after soliciting funds from former choir members for just two years. Beth Howlett, Class of 1968, summarized the feelings of the alumni when she said, "Just from the amount of money that has been contributed to the fund, you must realize how much we loved this man, not only as a choral conductor, but also as a positive role model for success in life."<sup>140</sup>

With the 75<sup>th</sup> Choir Reunion approaching, it was felt by choir alumni that Wagnild needed to be honored in a tangible way on campus. The committee that was set up for the creation of the Endowment Fund, chaired by Joyce Elsner, included her husband Bert, Beth

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<sup>137</sup> "\$3,500 Given Prof. Wagnild for Music Aid," *Gettysburg Times*, June 6, 1960, Accessed Vertical File Wagnild, Prof. Parker B., Gettysburg College Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA.

<sup>138</sup> "Final Concert by Wagnild."

<sup>139</sup> Shagena, email interview; Tuceling, email interview.

<sup>140</sup> Bert Elsner, telephone interview by author, September 22, 2011; Beth Howlett, email interview by author, September 21, 2011.

Howlett, Signe Wagnild Shagena and her husband, Jon Wagnild, and Barbara Tuceling. They discussed ideas for almost nine months.<sup>141</sup> Previous suggestions had been made to dedicate a choir rehearsal room in Schmucker Hall in his honor, but future College plans for the modification of Schmucker would not allow it.<sup>142</sup> The committee eventually settled on erecting a statue of Wagnild and brought the project to College President Janet Morgan Riggs in the spring of 2009.<sup>143</sup> President Riggs formally accepted the gift on behalf of the College in a meeting on August 11<sup>th</sup> between the Elsners, Shagenas, and Ashlyn Sowell of the Gettysburg College Development Office.<sup>144</sup> A formal letter of commitment by Sowell accepting the statue was received in time for the committee's meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was also agreed that the statue would be funded by Wagnild's children, Signe Wagnild Shagena, Jon Wagnild and their families and not choir alumni.<sup>145</sup> With College approval in hand, plans moved forward for the statue's creation.

The sculpting and attention to detail of Wagnild's statue aspired to represent him in as lifelike a way as possible. It was Beth Howlett's idea to use the Charles Parks studio in Wilmington, Delaware. A contract for designing the statue was signed in November of 2009. Due to his ill health, it was not Charles Park who sculpted the statue, but Brad Vanneman.<sup>146</sup> The Elsners and Shagenas visited Wilmington frequently during the two months in which Vanneman

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<sup>141</sup> Bert Elsner, telephone interview; Joyce Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>142</sup> Joyce Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>143</sup> Ashlyn Sowell, email interview by author, October 4, 2011.

<sup>144</sup> Sowell, email interview; Shagena, email interview.

<sup>145</sup> Shagena, email interview.

<sup>146</sup> Howlett, email interview; Shagena, email interview.

created the statue with clay in order to guide the image and look of the statue.<sup>147</sup> They sought to have an image of Wagnild as he actually would have appeared while conducting the Choir by focusing on small details such as the tuxedo he wore to every concert and the position of his hands conducting his distinctive upbeat.<sup>148</sup> Vanneman was provided with pictures, measurements, and CDs of the Choir and was receptive of any suggestions that the benefactors had. When Vanneman had finished the statue in clay, it was brought to Laran Bronze Incorporated in Chester, Pennsylvania where it was cast into bronze. The Shagenas continued to visit the foundry as it was cast and the statue was finished shortly before the dedication on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010.<sup>149</sup> The day before the dedication, the statue was installed on the already prepared foundation with hidden screws and covered for the unveiling. However, in a moment of Friday night college revelry, the covering was stolen and had to be replaced by the Department of Public Safety. That same night, it was revealed to the committee that it was Wagnild's children who had donated the money, a fact kept secret until that time.<sup>150</sup> All was ready for the official dedication on homecoming weekend.

The dedication of the statue on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 was an important and moving moment in the 75<sup>th</sup> Choir Reunion for both alumni and the Wagnild family. Janet Morgan Riggs spoke, as did the President of the College Board of Trustees, Bob Duelks, and Edward Palmer.<sup>151</sup> Palmer, at the beset of Signe Shagena and Jon Wagnild, delivered the same speech that he had given at Wagnild's memorial service almost 20 years before.<sup>152</sup> He said of the occasion that he "felt

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<sup>147</sup> Bert Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>148</sup> Shagena, email interview; Bert Elsner, telephone interview; Joyce Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>149</sup> Shagena, email interview.

<sup>150</sup> Bert Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>151</sup> Bert Elsner, telephone interview.

<sup>152</sup> Shagena, email interview.

honored to be introduced by President Riggs and the request to render the statue dedication tribute to ‘Wags.’ It was a beautiful October day, there was excitement when the statue was unveiled, and there was a marvelous thread of joy and appreciation that accompanied the occasion as large numbers of choir members past and present gathered around the statue.”<sup>153</sup> Wagnild relatives came from all over the country as well as 200 choir alumni and despite the near interruption of the marching band on its way back from a football game, Signe Shagena described the event as, “a very rewarding and happy time for us as we remembered Dad and talked to so many previous choir students who were also reminiscing of the ‘olden days’”<sup>154</sup> It was perhaps a moment of perfection that Wagnild would have been proud of.

With current student’s apathy for Wagnild’s statue, it would be easy to ignore it when discussing campus, yet a statue is appropriate because of his lasting impact on the musical life of the College and his own students. Barbara Tuceling argues two reasons for its presence: “First, the length of his tenure at the college. Then, the number of students he taught or conducted or influenced over those years, both inside and outside the music department. Next, the enduring tradition of the choir and music department.”<sup>155</sup> Not only did Wagnild touch his students’ lives, but he did it over a period of forty-one years while perpetuating what became one of the college’s most beloved institutions. Robert Zellner maintains that he deserves a statue because of the reputation of the Choir under Wagnild and the positive publicity that it brought the college.<sup>156</sup> Signe Wagnild Shagena believes that her father should be memorialized in bronze

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<sup>153</sup> Palmer, email interview.

<sup>154</sup> Shagena, email interview.

<sup>155</sup> Tuceling, email interview.

<sup>156</sup> Zellner, telephone interview.

because other individuals who have made an impact on College history have buildings and other memorializing items named after them.

Perhaps it was most simply put by Michael Matsinko when he advised students to, “Think about your band director and think about how much you are influenced by that person. Think about how many years he [Wagnild] directed and the alumni he influenced, the network.”<sup>157</sup> Camaraderie exists between a director and his musical ensemble that is not there in an academic setting. When a director of any group is so revered and teaches as long and as well as Wagnild, that bond is intensified. If one looks at this in combination with the institutions that Wagnild helped to found, it is absolutely appropriate that a statue should have been erected in his honor. Wagnild is a distinctive upbeat in College history that should always be remembered.

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<sup>157</sup> Matsinko, telephone interview.