

MORE 2005 ESSAYS

[Death Penalty Response](#)

[Student Health Insurance](#)

[Ray Fort](#)

[Western Diary I](#)

[Western Diary II](#)

[Western Diary III](#)

[Western Diary IV](#)

[Western Diary V](#)

[Western Diary VI](#)

[Senior Spelling Bee 2005](#)

[Job in Denver](#)

[Western Diary VII](#)

[Western Diary VIII](#)

[Denny Storer](#)

[Western Diary IX](#)

[Western Diary X](#)

[Western Diary XI](#)

[Trip Pictures](#)

[Renovare Bible I](#)

[Renovare Bible II](#)

[Complicated Grief](#)

[To the Flag](#)

[To the Flag II](#)

[Black Trials](#)

[Black Trials II](#)

[Ten Commandments](#)

[Ten Commandments II](#)

[Commandments III](#)

[Commandments IV](#)

[Autobiographies](#)

[Autobiographies II](#)

[Jeffrey Lehman--Cornell](#)

A Western Diary VIII

Bill Long 6/23/05

Garden City, KS and Lance Woodbury

Lance and I met for lunch on Tuesday, June 21, in [Garden City](#). We had not seen each other in a decade, **but I remembered him fondly as one of my brightest students at Sterling College during the early 1990s. After finishing his degree at Sterling, he continued with a M.A. at George Mason Univ. in conflict resolution and then subsequently picked up a M.B.A. through Purdue.** For the last 9 years he has been working (as a nonaccountant) with Kennedy & Coe, one of the leading accounting and consulting firms on agricultural issues in the Midwest. **He now is a partner with the firm and manages their large Garden City office. Though I rarely dedicate a page to a man who is only 34, I want to tell you about Lance, because I believe he will cast a large shadow in the future, both in KS and beyond.**

Memories of Lance

My earliest memories of Lance illustrate the correctness of the Talmudic dictum that where there is peace, there is no truth, and where there is truth, there is no peace. I "inherited" Lance as a history and government major when I arrived at Sterling in September 1990. **By late 1991 he was involved in two "truth-telling" episodes with the President of the College in which Lance, rather than the President, was on firmer ground.** In the first of those, Sterling College had made an ill-advised venture into the continuing education field by purchasing the programs of a dying college in rural Missouri. **We, who barely could support ourselves in Sterling, were then offering courses as far away as the boot of Missouri--500 miles distant.** Lance wrote articles for the student paper and asked for financial clarity on how much these programs were costing the college.

Then, a year later, after the President pulled some books from the campus bookstore because of their verbal content (too many four-letter words for a Nazarene President), Lance gently chided him for heavy-handedness. The President fulminated against Lance, charging him with a variety of shortcomings--from having a less than Christian attitude to trying to get the manager of the bookstore fired. To Lance's credit, instead of retaliating he calmly shook his head and continued to speak truthfully about college life as he saw it. The President's actions eventually caught up with him a few years later, when he abruptly announced that he was going to pursue what he characterized as greener pastures in private higher education in Mississippi.

Fast Forward

From the beginning, then, I knew that Lance was a straightforward person, who would patiently explain his position as he let you know where he stood. He also took his Christian faith very seriously, believing that faith without works was dead, and that a Christian faith that didn't try to help less fortunate people wasn't worth the words that came out of such a Christian's mouth. **In those days, Lance was not so much an "in your face" person as an "in your soul" young man. He said he always liked my teaching methods, where I introduced students to primary texts and where I challenged them to learn about the great shaping figures of the Western literary, scientific and intellectual tradition.**

I met with Lance on June 21 over lunch, and we continued our conversation in their family room long into the night (his wife Dana awoke in the night and wondered where he was, but she assumed that since we were "big boys," we would eventually get some sleep). **We talked about all manner of things, from personal ambition to the**

[The Bead of Sweat](#)

[Ross Runkel](#)

[Hans Linde](#)

[Postpartum Depression](#)

[Postpartum Depression II](#)

[A Dream](#)

[Fools and Jerks](#)

[Heeding the Call](#)

[What If?? I](#)

[What If?? II](#)

[Two Guys In A Store](#)

[John H. Johnson](#)

[Another Dream](#)

[Albert Raboteau](#)

[Empty Nest I](#)

[Empty Nest II](#)

[Billy Graham/New Yorker](#)

[College 2005](#)

[College 2005 II](#)

[Redeemer Presbyterian Ch.](#)

[Redeemer II](#)

[Social Security Debate I](#)

[Social Security Debate II](#)

[Am Mus. Natural History I](#)

[Am Museum II](#)

[Spinning Katrina](#)

[Thomas Frank's *Kansas*](#)

[Kansas II](#)

[Kansas III](#)

[Parker Palmer](#)

challenges of life, to living in Western Kansas (Lance's family has owned a large ranch outside of Leoti for generations), to the challenges he faced immediately in work. I want to write briefly here why I think that Lance will make a significant contribution to the life of the Midwest, and beyond in the ensuing decades. Three things stand out to me about Lance.

Lance Woodbury as Bi-Cultural Man

When we speak of a person who is "bicultural," we usually mean she or he can speak two languages or has lived in a foreign and an American culture. **Lance is bi-cultural in that he perfectly understands both inner city and rural America. He grew up with his father, a Presbyterian minister, who chose to live below the poverty level in the poorest areas of Kansas City, KS; he spent the summers as a youth with his grandfather on the "Woodbury Ranch," located 13 miles north of Selkirk, KS.** Since Selkirk is "nowhere," where do you think the ranch was? He understands the grit, the poverty, the promise and the hopelessness of the inner city as well as the dynamics that define, as well as threaten, life in rural Kansas. **He knows the daily rhythms of life in both environments, and feels equally comfortable with those who have never stepped on a farm and those who are scared of the inner city.**

Lance Woodbury and the Theory/Practice of Family Business

But Lance also brings a profound understanding of the nature of family business to the table. He saw the way that his grandfather divided parts of the ranch for two of his three sons (Lance's father, the minister, chose a different path) and saw at first hand the family dynamics that resulted from that land transfer. **He understands in his heart the issues faced by families who, through wanting to preserve the family business or land, often end up making life difficult for themselves.**

Lance explained to me that the study of transfer of power and ownership in family businesses really consists of understanding three things: (1) the family system in which the transfer is occurring; (2) the issue of ownership--who gets what; and (3) the issue of who will manage and how the business will be managed in the future. **In addition, Lance has spotted an issue that has received almost no attention in the literature--the way that issues of faith often lay at the heart of, or surround, all three of the issues just listed.** Lance is well positioned to make significant contributions in the future to the theory and practice of transferring family businesses.

Lance Woodbury and the "Vision Thing"

But Lance also has the uncanny ability of coming into a situation and recognizing rather quickly what the "system" needs in order to be operating optimally. **Like his pointing out problems at Sterling College, Lance can clearly, concisely and without emotional investment suggest what needs to be done to improve systems of human relations and administrative structures.** He will be able to articulate a strategy, I believe, of how Kennedy & Coe might be able not simply to consolidate its work today but to expand it tomorrow. And, if the past has any influence on the future, Lance will probably be asked to take a leadership role in implementing changes.

All in all, it was a perfectly wonderful visit to Kansas.

[Next](#)