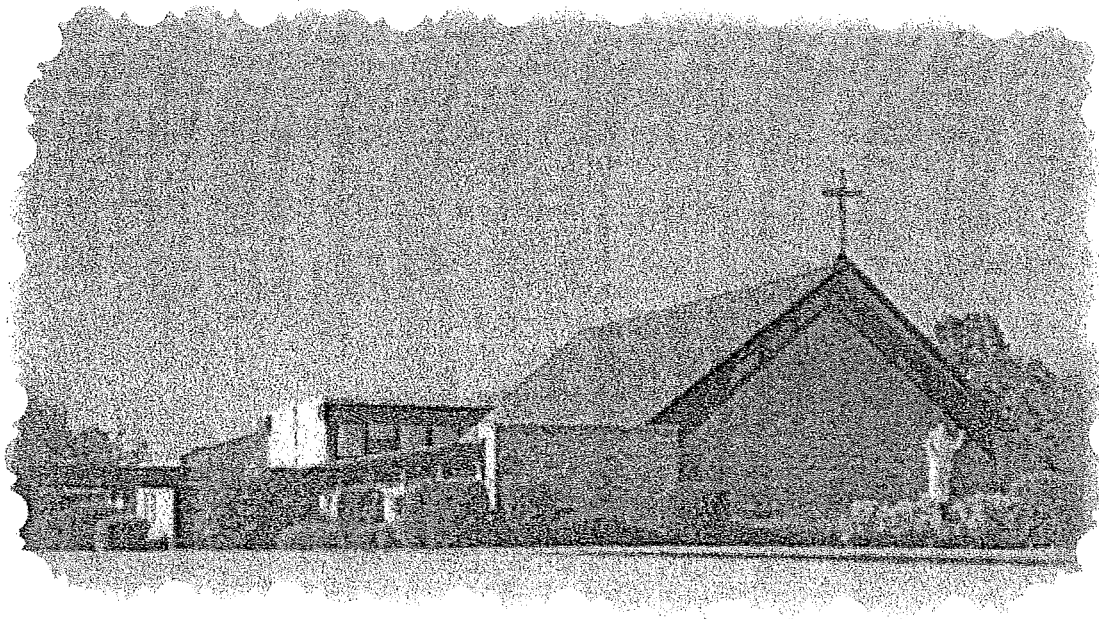


# Historical Highlights

## St. John's Lutheran Church

### Ladysmith, WI



### Sixty Five Years of Blessings

1916-1980

Compiled by: Helen Sandon, Church Historian

August 16, 1981

HISTORICAL

HIGHLIGHTS

1916 - 1981

Sixty-five Years

of Blessings



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St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church

Ladysmith, Wisconsin

Compiled by:

Helen Sandon, Church Historian

August 16, 1981

## Historical Highlights

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Ladysmith, Wisconsin

### 1916 - 1920 The Formative Years

The date of organizing St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church was June 8, 1916, although its actual beginnings date back to the summer of 1915. At first only a Sunday School was conducted. The number of pupils grew from 3 in the summer to 13 by Christmas. In June the first regular worship service was held. Before long several men, namely, Herman Flunker - a cheesemaker, Edward Will - a farmer, Adam Reidner - a paper mill worker, and William Wendt - an assistant superintendent at the paper mill, were ready to establish a congregation which was called St. John's. At this time, membership was applied for in the North Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

In 1916 the Rev. Ernest Schwartz was assigned to Ladysmith by the Mission Board of the District. His salary was \$600.00 a year. At first services were conducted in an abandoned movie house, rent-free. Because this building was not heated, a new location had to be found at the end of August. The Odd Fellows Hall was rented for 50¢ a Sunday and was used for 15 months. Then the rent was raised to \$1.50 a Sunday. Since this was more than could be afforded, services were held at the pastor's home until arrangements could be made to use the Labor Hall at \$1.00 a week. On June 17, 1917 Pastor Schwartz was granted a release to accept a call to Michigan.

The Rev. Otto Messerschmidt, uncle of the Rev. Eldore Messerschmidt who pastored St. John's from 1956 to 1966, took charge of the vacancy until August 12 when the Rev. R. Reichmann, seminary candidate, was installed. Services then were held in Martin's (dance) hall. Shortly before Pastor Reichmann left in Feb. 1918 the congregation was able to obtain the basement of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, which was under construction at the time, for its services. Pastor F. Gohlke became St. John's third pastor a few months later. He also served congregations at Conrath, Sheldon and Gilman. On May 18, 1918 St. John's acquired the old Methodist Church building for the sum of \$1,800.00. In September of that year the residence of J. M. Graff at 514 E. Worden Avenue was purchased for \$4,000.00. This home was to be used as a parsonage. In 1918 a donation of pews was received from our sister congregation at Abbotsford, Wisconsin. On March 10, 1919 incorporation papers giving the title "The Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Congregation of the Town of Ladysmith" were signed by Herman Flunker, Edward Will and Otto Radloff and were notarized by John Manning. Later that year Pastor Gohlke was granted a peaceful release to serve a congregation near Merrill, Wisconsin.

### 1920 - 1930 The First Decade after World War I

The Rev. C. B. Voelz came to Ladysmith in 1920 and served until June 1924 when he was released to fill a vacancy at Glidden, Wisconsin. The fifth pastor, the Rev. H. Proehl, came to St. John's later in 1924. In 1925 resolutions were adopted to purchase a new site and to build a new church. In 1927 Pastor Proehl left to become an instructor at Concordia Collegiate Institute in Bronxville, New York. During the vacancy, the Rev. H. Daib, Merrill, President and Missions Director of the North Wisconsin District, served St. John's congregation. Under his guidance action was started on a building program. A loan of \$10,000 was assured from the District Church Extension Fund. The old church was torn down but the original site was maintained. The corner stone of the new church was laid in June 1927 and the building was dedicated on Sept. 25, 1927. The first pastor of the new church was the Rev. Lawrence Gallman, who was installed on the church dedication day. Pastor Gallman and Charles Doehr designed and built the altar, pulpit, lectern, baptismal font and altar railing in the new church of a fine grade of oak obtained fro



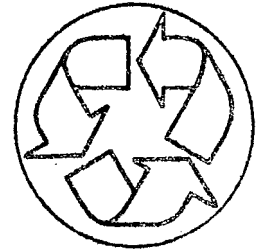
the Twin Cities. Material and expenses were paid by the Ladies Aid.

### 1930 - 1940 The Growing Years

The Fifteenth Anniversary of the church was held on June 7, 1931. Church membership had grown to 220 souls. The Sunday School had also grown accordingly. In December 1934 Pastor Gallman accepted a call to St. Matthew congregation in Eau Claire. During the interim the congregation was served by candidate Lloyd Goetz (later President of the North Wisconsin District) until March 17, 1935 when the Rev. Edwin M. Kuerschner was installed. In 1937 the Ladies Aid purchased a church bell from a disbanded congregation near Reedsburg, Wisconsin. A year later a used pipe organ was purchased from a sister church in Alma, Wisconsin.

### 1940 - 1950 The Decade of World War II

On June 8, 1941 St. John's congregation observed its 25th anniversary during the pastorate of the Rev. E. M. Kuerschner. The congregation had grown to a membership of 187 communicants and 265 souls. The Sunday School had an enrollment of 54. A new Minshall-Este electric organ and chimes were purchased by the congregation on December 7, 1947.

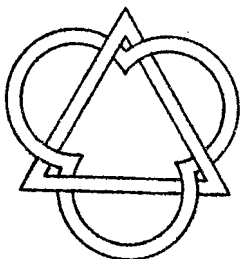


### 1950 - 1960 The Expansion Years

A special service was held on March 30, 1952 at which time the Board of Trustees: Carroll Graves, Edward Witt and Albert Herrmann burned the paid up mortgage of the church. On March 25, 1955 Pastor Huerschner was granted a peaceful release to accept a call to Morristown, Minnesota. The Rev. Melvin Geffert of Sheldon then served as vacancy pastor until July 1956. During the summer of 1955 the parsonage was remodeled and a garage was attached to the house. In the spring of 1956 it was decided that because of the heavy schedule at St. John's the pastor to be called would not be able to serve the congregation (Immanuel) at Conrath. An invitation was extended to the members of Immanuel, Conrath and also to the members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Ladysmith, which had disbanded, to make St. John's their new home. Many families accepted and became members of St. John's.

On July 8, 1956 the Rev. Eldore Messerschmidt was installed as the 8th pastor of St. John's congregation. Pastor Messerschmidt soon began having two worship services on Sunday morning to help relieve the crowded conditions in the church auditorium. A six man committee was appointed by Pastor Messerschmidt on Nov. 15, 1956 to make plans for building a new church on a new site. On April 28, 1957 it was decided to purchase 11 acres of ground on Highway 27 south of the city from Harold Peavey. Several outdoor services were conducted on the new church grounds during that summer. On June 25, 1957 Mr. Edgar Stubenrauch of Sheboygan, Wisconsin was selected as architect to design and build a new church. In the fall of 1957 H. P. Demand and Associates of Evanston, Illinois were hired to advise the building committee in a fund raising campaign. \$63,000 in cash and pledges was assured by the members in payment over three years. Blueprints were revised several times, and finally in the fall of 1958 plans for the church were let out on bids.

### 1960 - 1970 The Building and Growing Years

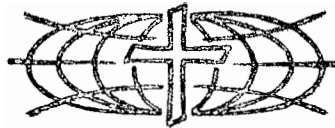


At the final meeting of St. Paul's Congregation on Aug. 19, 1960 a trust fund of \$5,000 was presented to St. John's with the stipulation that the interest received on this investment - not the principal - be used in a manner decided on by the Finance Committee of St. John's Congregation. The \$5,000 was invested in the Church Extension Fund of the North Wisconsin District.

The committee decided in favor of a Scholarship Fund for students preparing to enter the preaching-teaching ministry of the LC-MS. Since that initial trust fund of 1960 two additional funds (Dudacek and Schlomann Scholarship Fund) have been established to assist young men and women preparing themselves for a career as a church worker. At the close of 1960 St. John's congregation listed a communicant membership of 401 and 630 baptized souls.

Ground breaking ceremonies for the new church were held on April 30, 1961. Actual construction was begun May 4 with Tony Mataczynski as general contractor. The cornerstone was laid on August 13, 1961. The new church was dedicated on April 8, 1962. Pastor Eldore Messerschmidt conducted the morning service. 940 were able to get into the church and fellowship hall. Many more were turned away for lack of room. The Rev. A. H. Krueger of Butternut, Wisconsin conducted the afternoon service with the sermon being delivered by the Rev. Lloyd Goetz of De Pere, Wisconsin, President of the North Wisconsin District. Two former pastors, the Rev. Lawrence Gallman and the Rev. Edwin Kuerschner, took charge of the evening service.

On Dec. 13, 1962 the old church building was sold to the National Tea Company for approximately \$13,000. On May 11, 1963 all the shrubbery was planted around the church. Later part of the lawn was sodded and the rest seeded and the parking areas and driveways blacktopped. In 1964 an electronic bell system was installed as a memorial in memory of Mrs. Anna Hocking. The bells and hymns, played at regular intervals throughout the day and evening, can be heard throughout the city and in the countryside. Two years later the electronification of the tower bell was established by the children of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Lesik, Sr. In May 1965 the Ladies Aid presented the building committee with \$1,000 earmarked as the final payment on the blacktop around the church.



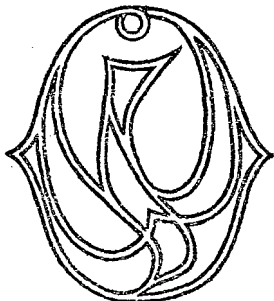
On Sunday evening, May 24, 1965 a service was held to give special recognition and honor to Mrs. Herman Schlomann for serving her church as a Sunday School teacher for 40 years. Donald Johnson, the first young man from St. John's congregation to enter into the Holy Ministry was ordained at St. John's on June 5, 1966. The 50th anniversary service for St. John's congregation took place on June 12, 1966. The morning service was conducted by the Rev. Donald Johnson. The Rev. Lawrence Gallman of Fairbault, Minnesota delivered the anniversary address. In the afternoon the Rev. Edwin Kuerschner of Morristown, Minnesota conducted the service and his son, the Rev. Victor Kuerschner of New Holstein, Wisconsin delivered the sermon. In August 1966 Pastor Eldore Messerschmidt received and accepted a call to Immanuel Lutheran Church at Marshfield, Wisconsin.

At an evening service on April 9, 1967 the Rev. David Brockopp of Land-O-Lakes, Wisconsin was installed as pastor of St. John's congregation by Dr. Lloyd Goetz, District President. Following the service a reception for Pastor Brockopp and his family was held in the fellowship hall of the church. At the Nov. 1967 voter's meeting a purchase of land was approved. This consisted of approximately 4 acres lying immediately east of the church. The land was purchased from Mrs. Robert Larson for \$2,200. Pastor Brockopp received and accepted a call to Dryden, Ontario, Canada. He preached his last sermon at St. John's on May 12, 1968. During the vacancy, services were conducted by professors from Concordia College, St. Paul.

On Sept. 8, 1968 the Rev. Edgar E. Barg of Embarrass, Wisconsin was installed as the new pastor at St. John's. The Rev. Glenn Renken, Phillips, Wisconsin delivered the sermon and performed the Rite of Installation. The Rev. John Grande, Prentice

Wisconsin served as liturgist. Other pastors from Circuit 13 also assisted in the service. A reception in honor of Pastor and Mrs. Barg and family was held in the fellowship hall after the service. In 1969 17 communicant members from the disbanded Bethany Lutheran Church in Bruce transferred their membership to St. John's. On Sunday, Sept. 7, 1969 Mrs. Clara Juergens was presented an engraved pin in recognition of 40 years of faithful service to St. John's Sunday School, many of them as Sunday School superintendent. At the end of December 1969 the membership roll of St. John's listed 716 souls, 502 communicants and 58 voting members. The Sunday School enrollment was 162 and 42 pre-school children were listed on the cradle roll.

#### 1970 - 1980 Building and Growing Years Continued

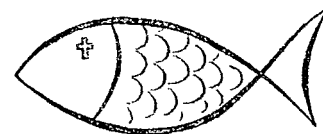


At the annual meeting in January it was decided to construct a new parsonage in 1970. On March 19 the building plans were approved and in mid-spring several crews of men from the congregation began brushing operations just east of the church on the parsonage site. In April the lot was bulldozed and the basement dug. By the end of July the exterior work was 95% completed and the grading work was done. In September the old parsonage on Worden Avenue was sold for \$13,500 to Marshall Ruegger. The new parsonage was dedicated during Sunday morning services on Oct. 18, 1970. An open house was held from 2:00 to 8:00 PM. Coffee and bars were served in the fellowship hall of the church.

At the first voter's meeting in 1971 a motion was adopted to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 for male voting members of the congregation. During the Memorial Day weekend, shrubbery around the parsonage was planted by Walter Balko, Joseph Bejcek and Pastor Barg. During the summer of 1971 the Ladies Aid purchased and hung new draperies in the narthex of the church. In November a program of stewardship training was carried on. 60% of the families in the congregation responded to the special meetings. The remaining 40% were called on by the Board of Elders. This stewardship emphasis stressed the need for better church attendance, involvement and participation in worship, Bible study, service, giving and Christian fellowship.

New Sunday School rooms - an action postponed for several years - became the building project for 1972. At the end of January 1972 the classroom building project thermometer showed a beginning fund of \$26.00; at the end of February: \$866.02; at the end of March: \$1,370.17; by July 1 the date of beginning of construction: \$6,050.62. Pledges and cash donations totaled \$25,352.00 by the second week in August. At this time the note on the parsonage and the remaining indebtedness on the church was paid. Cost of the classroom building was \$56,848.13 (about \$3,000 less than the projected cost). Dedication day for the newly completed Sunday School building was June 3, 1973. The Rev. Eldore Messerschmidt, Marshfield, Wisconsin was guest speaker at the 10:30 AM dedication service. A smorgasbord dinner was served at noon. Many persons attended the dinner and the services and later toured the new facilities.

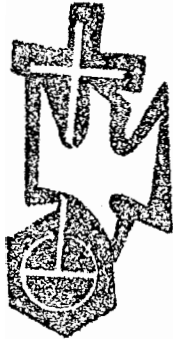
In July 1972 the Rev. Edwin M. F. Jording retired from his pastorate at Sheldon-Gilman and also from the active ministry of the LC-MS. Pastor and Mrs. Jording joined St. John's congregation. Pastor Jording's status was listed as "emeritus". During Lent 1973 Pastor Jording volunteered his services during the Lenten season and preached the mid-week Lenten sermons. Upon the approval of the voter's assembly, the Rev. Edwin M. F. Jording was listed as "Pastoral Assistant" (non salaried) at St. John's congregation.



St. John's Senior Choir joined other Ladysmith choirs, the LHS Choir and the Mt. Senario College Choir in a sacred concert at the LHS auditorium on March 31, 1974. Also in 1974 another .8 acre of land was purchased from Mrs. Larson because a recent survey showed that part of the parsonage and adjoining land was on her property. In 1975 the newly organized Men's Club voted to present a Bible to each pupil in our Sunday School when they entered the third grade class. August 24, 1975 became a "red letter day" in St. John's history when it received 15 adults as communicant members via the rite of adult confirmation. The blacktop on the church and parsonage lot was cleaned and sealed at a cost of \$2,000 in September 1975.

1916 - 1976

Sixtieth Anniversary



As America observed its bicentennial in 1976, so St. John's congregation observed its 60th anniversary with a special event scheduled for each month of the year. Guest speakers for the special occasions included Circuit 13 Counselor Rev. Gerald Homp, Rev. Edwin M. F. Jording, Pastoral Assistant, Rev. Lawrence Gallman, former pastor of St. John's, Rev. Donald Johnson, first young man from St. John's to enter the ministry of the LC-MS, Rev. Edwin Kuerschner, former pastor of St. John's and his son, Rev. Victor Kuerschner, and Martin E. Shimko and Paul Woebeking, sons of the congregation in study for the ministry in the LC-MS.

A birthday celebration was held on Jan. 30, 1976 for Martha Frost on her 100th birthday. At a pot luck dinner she was presented several gifts including a money tree of 100 silver dollars. Later she returned the \$100 gift to the Building Fund. For the first  $4\frac{1}{2}$  months of 1977 Pastors Barg and Jording assumed the preaching duties of Trinity, Sheldon and Zion, Gilman during their pastoral vacancy. In May 1977 Pastor Barg was elected to fill an unexpired one year term as a member of the Board of Directors of the North Wisconsin District. October 1977 featured a first-ever for the Ladysmith area - a Reformation Rally commemorating the 460th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation (Oct. 31, 1517). The rally was sponsored by the Men's Club and was held in the LHS auditorium. Guest speaker was the Rev. Dr. David C. Scaer from Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. By fall the ladies of the congregation had made 60 quilts to be included in the congregation's donation to Lutheran World Relief.

In 1978 a large cross made from the trunks of our two Christmas trees and a colorful Lenten banner made by the ladies of the Bruce Circle graced our sanctuary during the Lenten season. The fellowship hall and classroom building were busy places in May when congregation members arrived at scheduled times to have portraits taken for a new pictorial church directory. At the district convention in June Pastor Barg was elected to a 4-year term as a member of the Board of Directors of the North Wisconsin District. On July 9 St. John's congregation observed the 25th anniversary of Pastor Barg's ordination and service in the ministry and also the silver anniversary of Pastor and Mrs. Barg's marriage. On August 27 the Sunday services were conducted by two students of theology from St. John's congregation. Martin E. Shimko served as liturgist and Seminarian Paul Woebeking delivered the sermon. Church directories with pictures and names and addresses of all church members and all organizations of St. John's congregation were distributed to each family on Jan. 14, 1979. The Board of Elders set up a Memorial Committee to oversee the placement of monies in the Memorial Fund for various congregational needs. Through special funds from the A.A.L. (local branch 1436) a picnic area was developed on the hill northeast of the parking lot. Men's Club members assisted in cleaning up the picnic area. Picnic tables were built, a baseball backstop was erected, and horseshoe pits were put in. The picnic area is available to all members of the congregation for family outings and group get-togethers.

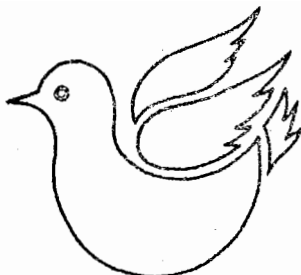


Paul Woebbeking, son of Raymond and Doris Woebbeking, Glen Flora was ordained into the ministry of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod at St. John's Church on Sat., June 23 in a 2:00 PM service. Pastor Barg delivered the sermon and performed the Rite of Ordination. The Rev. Eldore Messerschmidt, former pastor of St. John's, served as Lector and assisted in the laying on of hands. Later in summer of 1979 Pastor Woebbeking assumed his charge in Desboro, Ontario, Canada.

The Scholarship Fund of the congregation received a substantial increase from the estate of Mrs. Rose Dudacek and also from the Schломann family in memory of Herman and Emma Schломann. Monies from the funds have been invested in the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (North Wisconsin District). Interest earned on the investments is used to assist young men and women who are preparing for church careers. The Dudacek Scholarship Fund also aids students from other congregations in Cir. 13 of the North Wisconsin District who are in need of financial assistance. St. John's now has three scholarship funds in operation.

On December 22 the car port on the west side of the church was demolished in an accident involving a service truck that did not have sufficient clearance to pass under the structure. Insurance covered the replacement costs. The 70's closed with a membership of 719 souls and 554 communicant members.

1980 ... Into a New Decade under the Blessing of Almighty God



A budget of \$67,150.00 was adopted for 1980. In April a tanker of fuel oil (7,000 gallons) was purchased at a cost of \$6,153.00. On May 25 Mr. Orval Moser retired as Sunday School superintendent. He received an appropriate gift to accompany his hobby - fishing. The position of superintendent will be filled when classes resume in fall by Mr. Paul Granroth. Pastor Edwin M. F. Jording, emeritus, was called to his eternal rest very unexpectedly on Sunday, June 22. He was

granted Christian burial from St. John's on the following Thursday. Interment was at Sheldon. Beginning in July the exterior trim of all the buildings was painted by Truman Ramberg, Lloyd Diederich and Pastor Barg. The date of the children's Christmas Eve service was changed from Dec. 24 to the Sunday evening preceding Christmas Eve. A Candlelight Service was held on Christmas Eve with special music supplied by the Senior Choir. The Ladies Aid annual bazaar showed a profit of more than \$1,250. A budget of \$73,405.00 was adopted for 1981. Plans were made for 4 special anniversary services for 1981:

- January 11 - Epiphany Fest Tree burning ceremony, caroling, supper, fellowship
- April 26 - Old Timer's Day Beard contest, dinner, dress-up contest
- August 16 - 20th anniversary of cornerstone laying pot luck dinner (L.W.M.L.)
- November 1 - Reformation emphasis (youth)

As this 65th anniversary year was entered, St. John's listed a communicant membership of 561 and 736 souls, 79 voting members, 111 on the Sunday School roster and 40 on the Cradle Roll.

Our congregation is indebted to Miss Helen Sandon for many years of faithful work as our church historian. On our August 16 anniversary celebration we wish to recognize her dedication and faithfulness, thank her for her many hours of labor of love, and wish her much happiness and many blessings from on high in the future.

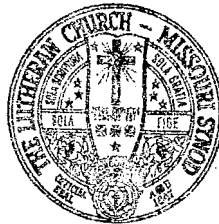




St. John's Lutheran Church - Ladysmith, Wis.

Servants of the Lord in Ministry

Rev. Ernest Schwartz	1915 - 1917
Rev. R. Reichmann	1917 - 1918
Rev. F. Gohlke	1918 - 1919
Rev. C. B. Voelz	1920 - 1924
Rev. H. Proehl	1924 - 1927
Rev. Lawrence Gallman	1927 - 1934
Rev. Edwin Kuerschner	1935 - 1955
Rev. Eldore Messerschmidt	1956 - 1966
Rev. David Brockopp	1967 - 1968
Rev. Edgar E. Barg	1969 - 1989
Rev. Brent G. Berkesch	1990 - 2003
Rev Jeffrey A. Ahonen	2004 -



Our Parish Record

	<u>Baptisms</u>	<u>Confirmations</u>	<u>Weddings</u>	<u>Funerals</u>
1916 - 1926	46	10	2	1
1927 - 1936	112	110	31	27
1937 - 1946	130	80	33	11
1947 - 1956	151	93	36	16
1957 - 1966	290	251	72	76
1967 - 1976	174	182	101	96
1977 - 1981 **	84	85	46	33

\*\*(thru June 1, 1981)

