

**1945 October 15-21**

**A War Chaplain Speaks**

**Study Club Hears  
Chaplain S. M. Tweeten**

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The Study Club held their initial meeting of the year at the home of Mrs. H. W. Griswold last Monday afternoon. The president, Mrs. M. J. Quiggle opened the meeting at 3:00 o'clock and introduced the speaker, Chaplain S. M. Tweeten, recently returned from three and a half years service in the South Pacific. He gave a most interesting and informative talk on his impressions and experiences in Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines. Chaplain Tweeten is an entertaining speaker and the study club is fortunate in having been able to hear him at this time.

*(West Salem Journal, 1945 October 18, page 1)*

Civic and social organizations, such as the West Salem Study Club in the article above, are always on the lookout for informative and timely speakers. In 1945, that often was war veterans or others with some knowledge about the war and related world affairs.

Had it not been for marriage to a local woman, this area would have never seen nor heard of S. M. Tweeten.

Sigvard Magnus Adolphus Tweeten was born on December 30, 1909, at Norge, Virginia, to Jacob O. Tweeten and Maud Odelia Tweeten.<sup>1</sup>

Jacob Tweeten was a minister, so the family moved around the country as he was assigned to different churches. After [Norge, Virginia](#), they lived in Chicago; [Lee, Illinois](#); and [Albert Lea, Minnesota](#). In 1928, they moved to [DeForest, Wisconsin](#).<sup>2</sup>

Just like his father, Sigvard Tweeten chose the ministry as his career path. He graduated from [Luther College](#) in Decorah, Iowa, in about 1931. Then he enrolled at the [Luther Theological Seminary](#) in St. Paul, Minnesota. Tweeten graduated from the seminary in May 1934.<sup>3</sup>

That summer, he married Mildred Michelson at West Salem on July 12, 1934.<sup>4</sup> After graduating from West Salem High School, Michelson had become a nurse through the Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing. She worked as a private nurse before becoming the obstetrics nursing supervisor at [Chicago Lying In Hospital](#) of the University of Chicago.<sup>5</sup>

Mildred Michelson was born on February 12, 1908.<sup>6</sup> Her parents were Martin and Anna (Opsdahl) Michelson. Mildred and two brothers grew up on a farm in Larson Coulee, near West Salem.<sup>7</sup>

To culminate a busy 1934 summer, Sigvard Tweeten was ordained into the Lutheran ministry on July 29, 1934. His father assisted with the ordination at the Tabor Lutheran Church in Chicago. On that same day, the younger Tweeten was installed as the pastor of the [Tabor Lutheran Church](#).<sup>8</sup>

By early 1937, Pastor Tweeten had moved to the Trinity Lutheran Church in Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

Tweeten was a minister in Chicago for three years before moving to Minneapolis.<sup>10</sup>

In October 1940, 31-year-old Tweeten was the pastor for the [Gethsemane Lutheran Church](#) at 4656 Colfax Avenue N. in Minneapolis. He and his wife, Mildred, lived at 4650 Colfax Avenue N.<sup>11</sup>

He served the Gethsemane church for two years before another call to service came---this one from Uncle Sam. The expanding army needed chaplains to minister to the spiritual needs of the troops. Sigvard Tweeten entered the United States Army in July 1941.<sup>12</sup> His first assignment was to [Camp Livingston, Louisiana](#), and then Tweeten was sent to Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>13</sup>

When Tweeten was sent overseas in April 1942, his wife and daughter went to West Salem to live near her family.<sup>14</sup>

His initial destination was Australia.<sup>15</sup> On the ship, Chaplain Tweeten conducted church services during a trip across the Pacific Ocean that he described as "pleasant" and featured fresh food "all during the voyage." He wrote that cities in Australia appeared to be thirty years behind American cities. Every Australian town, from smallest to largest, had a book store to satisfy the reading interests of Australians who, according to Tweeten, supposedly "read more per capita than do people of any other country." One Sunday he was the guest speaker at a Lutheran church in a valley covered with "many acres of grapes, orange, and lemon groves, and olive trees." He called it "one of the prettiest sights I have ever seen." Tweeten related that he was thrilled that the church was at full capacity the day he spoke.<sup>16</sup> Australia was very grateful for the presence of American troops, and the people were "very hospitable and progressive."<sup>17</sup>



(*Wisconsin State Journal*, 1942 August 24, page 27)

As part of the [32nd Infantry "Red Arrow" Division](#), Chaplain Tweeten was present for the unit's baptism in combat on the island of New Guinea. Tweeten had one word for New Guinea---"awful." It was a rain-saturated jungle where the mud competed with the insects for most misery-inducing.<sup>18</sup>

Tweeten was promoted to captain in late 1943.<sup>19</sup>

After several operations in New Guinea, the 32nd Division moved on to the Philippines to help take back the islands from the Japanese. In early 1945, Tweeten was promoted to major. During one of Chaplain Tweeten's sermons in a small Methodist church in a village on Luzon, several hundred American soldiers contributed almost \$100 to repair the church.<sup>20</sup> Tweeten's charitable bent to repair the religious infrastructure of the Philippines was a contrast to his intransigence towards American-Filipino personal relationships. He refused to give permission to every soldier who wanted to marry a Filipino woman.<sup>21</sup> The newspaper article about his speech to the West Salem Study Club gave no reason for his denials. We could speculate, but that would not be fair in the absence of any evidence.

While Sigvard Tweeten was attending to the religious needs of his olive drab flock, his brother was serving in an equally essential capacity. J. Kent Tweeten, also a graduate of Luther College, earned his medical degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1938. He joined the Army in June 1942 and served in Europe with the U.S. Army Medical Corps from August 1943 until being discharged in May 1946.<sup>22</sup>

Sigvard Tweeten was discharged from the Army on January 15, 1946,<sup>23</sup> but he later served in the National Guard.<sup>24</sup>

Following his military service in World War II, Tweeten returned to the civilian ministry. After his retirement, he and his wife lived in Fairmont, Minnesota, and Menomonie, Wisconsin.<sup>25</sup>

Tweeten was 89 years old when he died on December 21, 1999, in the Dunn County Health Care Center at Menomonie, Wisconsin. Funeral services were held in Menomonie, but Tweeten was buried in the Hamilton Cemetery at West Salem.<sup>26</sup>

Fifty-four years after speaking to the West Salem Study Club about his "41 Months Down Under,"<sup>27</sup> and after living in multiple places during his life, Sigvard M. Tweeten returned to West Salem for his final resting place.



[\(Find a Grave\)](#)

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#### Sources & Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> "U.S., Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Church Records, 1781-1969," *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 October 25) transcription and image of *Congregational Records*, page

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1904-3, crediting "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Archives, Elk Grove Village, Illinois." This record shows the spelling of the last name as "Tweten."

<sup>2</sup> "Son of DeForest Pastor to Join Clergy Sunday," *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1934 July 24, page 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Wisconsin State Journal*, 1934 July 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Wisconsin State Journal*, 1934 July 24.

<sup>5</sup> "Mildred M. Tweeten," *Tributes.com*, accessed 2020 October 25, <http://www.tributes.com/show/Mildred-Tweeten-90633346>.

<sup>6</sup> "Rev Sigvard M A Tweeten," *Find A Grave*, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/80772984/sigvard-m\\_a-tweeten](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/80772984/sigvard-m_a-tweeten), accessed 2020 October 25.

<sup>7</sup> "Anker Michael Michelson," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2005 October 5, page B-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Wisconsin State Journal*, 1934 July 24.

<sup>9</sup> "Southeast Church News," *Southeast Economist*, Chicago, Illinois, 1937 February 11, page 4.

<sup>10</sup> "Lt. S. M. Tweeten Is In Australia, Parents Informed," *The Capital Times*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1942 May 31, page 10.

<sup>11</sup> The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; *Draft Registration Cards for Minnesota, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947*; Record Group: *Records of the Selective Service System*, 147; Box: 239; image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 2020 October 25).

<sup>12</sup> "Australia Looks Like Old U.S., Tweeten Writes," *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1942 August 24, page 27.

<sup>13</sup> *The Capital Times*, 1942 May 31.

<sup>14</sup> "Major Tweeten's Congregation Contributes Money To Help Repair Philippine Church," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 March 8, page 1.

<sup>15</sup> *The Capital Times*, 1942 May 31.

<sup>16</sup> *Wisconsin State Journal*, 1942 August 24.

<sup>17</sup> "Study Club Hears Chaplain S. M. Tweeten," *West Salem Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 October 18, page 1.

<sup>18</sup> *West Salem Journal*, 1945 October 18.

<sup>19</sup> "Sigvard Tweeten Becomes Captain," *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1943 December 2, page 11.

<sup>20</sup> *The Nonpareil Journal*, 1945 March 8.

<sup>21</sup> *West Salem Journal*, 1945 October 18.

<sup>22</sup> "Tweeten, J. Kent M.D., *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, 2012 July 24, page 7.

<sup>23</sup> U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs, *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 October 25).

<sup>24</sup> "U.S., Select Military Registers, 1862-1985," *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 2020 October 25), image and transcription, "National Guard Register, Army," p. 902; crediting "United States Military Registers, 1902-1985, Oregon State Library, Salem, Oregon."

<sup>25</sup> "Mildred M. Tweeten," *Tributes.com*. Mildred (Michelson) Tweeten died on October 3, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> "Sigvard M. Tweeten," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1999 December 22, page D-6.

<sup>27</sup> "Study Club To Hold First Meeting Of Season Oct. 15," *West Salem Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 October 11, page 1.