

# *Honoring Rainwater*

***“There are certain things that are fundamental to human fulfillment. The need to leave a legacy is our spiritual need to have a sense of meaning, purpose, and contribution”***

***- Stephen R Covey.***



In 1907, Lindsey Wilson student Fred Rainwater, a track and field star of his day decided he would leave a legacy for future students of the college to enjoy. So the 20-year-old planted an Oak tree at the top of Lindsey Hill beside what is now the Administration building.

While Mr. Rainwater passed away in 1969, the towering oak tree still stands like a sentinel, silent manifestation of a young mans desire to leave a marker behind on his path through this world.

Inspired by the marker that now rests beneath the grand Rainwater Oak on the Lindsey campus; I decided to begin a new tradition with our cycling program

I had seen other colleges carry flags for their schools at bike races and I thought it was a wonderful thing. It reminded me of the Tour De France and the race up the mountain passes where fans of all regions would wave their standards. Fans from the Basque country would be

draped in orange, rider supporters from South America would always have their country's flag, and so seeing this at the collegiate level struck me as natural. There is no stronger bond than Nationalism, and a flag can easily become the embodiment of this passion.

But a flag is only a piece of cloth, and it would be unrealistic to believe that one could be both waved at events and handed down from generation to generation intact. So I decided to have a flag staff made that would honor our institution and its spirit. Something that my student-athletes could hold proudly at the races and that could be handed down to future generations of Lindsey Wilson cyclists long after our time here has passed.

So began my quest, my quest for permission.

You see, you don't just walk up to the Rainwater Oak tree with a saw, at least not if you want to keep your job.

So I took the idea to my athletics director. Willis Pooler looked at me with a sly grin and happily offered me



**The Rainwater Oak Tree (far left) sits in front of the L.R. McDonald Administration Building in the middle of the Lindsey Wilson College campus.**

any tree on campus for my project if I would just drop the idea of sawing a limb off of the Rainwater Oak.

And for the next couple weeks, I would find any number of tree branches, twigs, and random sticks in front of the door to the Athletics office with little notes, all being offered up as comical alternatives to my rainwater branch. My coworkers seemed to enjoy my struggle.

But with Willis' blessing, I went to our Vice President Dean Adams. Dean Adams looked at me with the same sly grin, and wouldn't you know it, he too offered me the use of any other tree on campus.

With his blessing I went to yet another Vice President in Roger Drake.

Roger was intrigued and asked me to step outside and discuss what branch might be used. Once a couple of candidates had been chosen, I got the nod I was looking for.

Now, it was time to figure out how to obtain this branch, some 30 feet off the ground.

Roger pointed me in the direction of one of our faculty, Ricky Williams who is a master woodworker. Ricky happily volunteered to harvest the branch and even finish it for me when it was done.

So on a fall afternoon Ricky pulled his ancient Corvair pick-up to the tree, broke out his 25 foot extension ladder, and with running chainsaw in hand and the ladder perched precariously in the bed of his truck, climbed to the top rung.



**Lindsey Wilson College President Bill Luckey helped the cycling program obtain the Rainwater branch.**

While Ricky stood atop the quivering aluminum ladder, a running chainsaw at the end of his outstretched arm, who appeared at the door outside the administration building but President Lucky himself.

“Fellas, can I help you?” he said smiling. Sure his voice offered assistance, but all I heard was, “What the hell are these knuckleheads up to, and which one will I fire first?”

But after explaining the method behind our madness, President Lucky himself helped hold the ladder.

Soon, a 20-foot branch was swinging down pendulum style as if to take a final swipe at the base of the ladder before giving itself up.

Ricky pruned the branch to a moveable piece and then it was off to Jackson County, Kentucky for a month in an old mountain kiln.

Once the wood was cured, it was ready to be worked. Peter Owen from our Upward Bound program volunteered to smooth and carve the branch. Peter took the project up with great care and detail, and returned to me a smooth, beautiful, and meticulously crafted branch.

So was born the Rainwater Staff. It began life as an acorn planted on top of Lindsey Hill by Fred Rainwater in 1907, and now begins a new journey as the conveyance that will carry our standard for generations to come, by racers not yet born.

The flag and staff debuted at the beginning of the 2009 road racing season. On the second weekend, the team captured the schools first ever victory in road racing. After the race, Lewis Almonte, who was in the winning break and helped Danny Estevez to the victory said, *“During the race it was nice to see that flag from almost one kilometer out, every time the break that Danny and I were in would pass by, we would see the flag flying high and our team cheering us on. It was like a little energy booster every time we passed by.”*



**Lindsey Wilson cyclist, James Brown (the godfather of cycling), holds the Rainwater Staff and the L W C flag at the 2009 DePauw University Criterium.**