

Greeting From the Storaasli Family,

Olaf K. Storaasli Memorial Service

22 May 2006

My name is Andy Nestingen, son of Jim and Carolyn Nestingen, grandchild of Lila and Olaf Storaasli. Our family wishes greetings to each of you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

When we celebrated Olaf's ninetieth birthday last fall, he gave each of his grandchildren a DVD. Anna Linnea Knutson and Karin Britta Knutson, two of his grandchildren, made the DVD with him. He recorded his message sitting at home in his favorite chair, the chair in which he died last Tuesday. He spoke about the importance in his life, and in our family, of education, music, and faith. At his birthday celebration, he apologized to us for preaching on the DVD. But it was a good sermon and it's worth revisiting.

Recalling in his message what he'd retained from his childhood, Olaf said: "our lives were governed by the ten commandments, good judgment, and common sense."

Well, that's not entirely true. We loved Olaf for his lapses in good judgment and common sense. Olaf's legs weakened during the last two decades of his life. He walked with canes, and later a walker. Good judgment and common sense would have consigned him to a wheelchair in about 1995. Despite his ungainly legs, my brother Peder gave him the name Velcro man one summer at the family cabin at Ottertail Lake. Over and over, Olaf stretched stiffly from his ladder reaching to paint beneath the eaves. The name stuck. On another occasion, common sense and medical judgment would have discouraged playing croquet with a walker. But just two years ago, there he was, hobbling about the lawn with his grandchildren, striking with one hand and balancing on the walker with the other. In the face of his enthusiasm and optimism, judgment and common sense often fell back.

His enthusiasm and optimism also appeared in his love of music. He grew up in a musical home and sang at St. Olaf College. Olaf and Lila used to go on dates at the Capital Theater in Saskatoon to hear the Visiting Performers' Series. When they returned from

Saskatchewan to Minnesota in 1960, they began to attend the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and visits by the Metropolitan Opera. When these groups changed, Olaf and Lila changed their subscriptions and continued to attend the performances of new groups. Olaf's love of music had its roots in a childhood of listening to music at home and at church. In Emmons Minnesota, where he grew up, Olaf listened to the classical music programming of WOI—Iowa State's radio service. His mother Alida was a trained musician. She would play the family's Chickering piano for hours. When she played "Grieg and other composers," our grandfather recalled, he would sometimes crawl under the dining room table to hide, moved to tears by the beauty of the melodies. Olaf chose some of today's hymns.

Still, Olaf's message to his grandchildren in the DVD made clear that he would not want us to celebrate his personality or his tastes today. He would wish us to know Jesus Christ, to remember Olaf Storaali as one who followed Christ. One of the passages he loved in the Gospel of John was the tenth chapter, the story of the Good Shepherd. John writes: "The gatekeeper opens the gate for

him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.” Olaf followed Christ through a gift of faith that abided all his life. In his faith, he also led our family.

We thank you for your presence with us today. Amen.