

Eulogy For Stanley Olson
by Timothy Olson

Thank you for coming to celebrate the life of our dad. Dad was a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He did not believe that the rule 'don't talk to strangers' applied to anyone over 80. The last time he visited us in Illinois we went out to eat, when we entered the restaurant dad was not with us. Turns out he was outside talking to a stranger.

The last time I was on this platform was when I was confirmed, almost 50 years ago. First Free played an important part in my early Christian life and I have many fond memories of the time I attended this church. Ron Olson, informed me that after a year teaching the Sunday School class he taught, he retired from teaching.

Our dad, Stanley Olson, was the third son of Norwegian immigrants, born in a Minneapolis home off of North Washington Avenue.

His father worked 7 days a week cleaning railroad cars. His mother cleaned and ironed for wealthy families.

Every Sunday evening the family would take the streetcar to the Bloomington Temple in south Minneapolis. Even though he worked 7 days a week he found time to help clean the church.

During the depression they took in roomers and always gave something to the homeless who got off the train, in a field across from their house. Even during those difficult times, they always tithed.

Dad graduated from Minnehaha Academy, lettering in baseball, basketball and debate. Summers he worked on a farm near Houston Minnesota where his brother Arnold had his first pastorate. After a year at St. Olaf College, he graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in history.

He met our mother, Myrtle Johnson, at the First Covenant youth group and was very impressed by a talk she gave on the 1939 New York World's Fair which he had also attended. They met to compare pictures and the rest, as they say, is history.

Dad thought he should perhaps follow his brothers into the ministry. But after just one term at Dallas Theological Seminary his father became seriously ill. So rather than return to seminary, Dad decided to take a job with Montgomery Wards.

Our parents were engaged a few months before the start of WWII and married in a private ceremony at First Covenant Church on February 6, 1942.

My brother Ross was born in December of 1942 and about six months later Dad went on active duty as a Naval Supply Officer. While serving at the Air Station in Ottumwa, Iowa, my folks helped revitalize a dying church and even sang duets on the radio.

Dad was then assigned to the USS Cape Johnson in the Pacific. While at sea my sister Merodie was born in February of 1945.

After his discharge from the Navy in early 1946, he returned to work at Montgomery Wards. Soon he became involved at First Covenant Church where he taught and served as Sunday School superintendent.

From Wards he moved to Kelvinator and then to the Douglas Company to become sales manager and vice president.

I was born in February of 1948 and my brother Bryan in March of 1951.

Speaking of birthdays, he never forgot one, we could always expect a card and check in the mail. I received one just last Monday. He had added a note of encouragement, remembering my volunteer work with the severely disabled adults. He was diligent at keeping up with the details of our lives and prayed for us without ceasing.

After resigning from the Douglas Company, Dad sold real estate before joining First Federal Savings and Loan where he eventually became Vice President for Marketing.

Our family moved to South Minneapolis in the early '50s and began attending this church. We lived near a great sledding hill that we renamed 'Olson' hill.

After retirement, Dad worked as Director of the Christian Investors Foundation for 10 yrs at the Free Church home office. He is credited with it's tremendous growth.

Dad held many leadership positions here at First Free, as well as serving on volunteer boards in the community. He enjoyed teaching and mentoring younger men.

His positive attitude and friendly nature always made a positive impression . . . allowing him to be a natural leader.

AND a great story teller . . . often starting with the phrase, "But the interesting thing is..." does that sound familiar?

His devotion to the Lord and constant study of God's Word assured that he would lead in a godly direction. His study and teaching always stressed real-life application of the Bible.

All this serious achievement did not prevent him from enjoying his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Our dad was a man of many talents... talents he used for the glory of God!

The card he sent me expresses my feelings toward him.

“Within each heart God has planted the seeds of greatness that blossom with the years.”