

**MEMORIAL CHAPEL - March 13, 1979**

**INVOCATION**

Dear God in Heaven:

This is a special day for us at Augustana - a day when we celebrate the life of your servant, Stanley Olsen. We thank you for his 74 years on your planet, Earth, but more especially for his 34 years associated with Augustana College. Please be with his family, friends, and colleagues at this time. We pray for them a rich experience during their sorrowing days. They will relive the memories of home, family, and college with new insights and with much tender meaning. The elements of their faith will gain reality. We pray a rich outpouring of God's spirit and His guidance in the midst of all this. Do not let us lose sight of Stan's contributions to Augustana - help us to learn from him in keeping Augustana YOUR institution. We ask this in the name of your Son, the Risen Christ.

Amen.

## REMARKS

To those of us who knew and worked with Stanley Olsen, no words are needed to describe his dedication, loyalty, and love for Augustana College. We are the richer for having had his on the Augustana faculty as teacher, department chairman, and division chairman. For those of you younger faculty and you students - your life is the less complete because you did not know him. He continued to be a student all his life; he took great pains and spent much effort in the preparation of his teaching materials; he was a firmly committed Christian with a burning desire to make the Christian faith relevant to the needs of our time; he had a unique way of challenging the best minds on the Augustana campus in such a way that they were able to harmonize keen and open intellectual endeavor with an acceptance of fundamental Christian concepts.

In one of his many writings while a professor at Augustana, Stanley quoted Michael Novak:

“The greatest contribution to the religious life of the college could come from teachers and scholars—formally religious or not—who could lead the student to the profound human experiences lying below the surface of the academic curriculum....”

This Stanley Olsen could do and did very successfully. I believe he would agree with me when I say to you faculty - go and do likewise! And his message to you students would be: Have the courage and determination to make the necessary sacrifices to see that what Has to be done will be done well.

Charles Balcer

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I was a junior when I transferred to Augustana College and was immediately impressed with my professors: Don and Lucy Fryxell, Earl Mundt, Palmer Eide, and Stanley Olsen. And the respect I had those early days only increased. These teachers are giants in the earth to me. One of the richest courses I took as a student was Dr. Olsen's Religions of Man. I was awed by Dr. Olsen; he entered class with a briefcase full of books, and he loved those books. He'd recount rich perceptions from his readings. I often thought I had never seen a face with a more kind countenance. I lost myself in those twinkling eyes, the shaking of his head at a serious thought, the silence as he considered a student's question, the placing of his hand on his chin in his most characteristic fashion as he began his reply. Few teachers have ever conveyed to me the love of knowledge as did Dr. Olsen. I struggled with strange Hindu names, Buddhist doctrines, marveled at the traditions of Zoroaster, was intrigued by the life of Mahavira. Dr. Olsen's anecdotes etched themselves on my heart; they did not allow me to remain complacent. Other students had that same reaction: his manner was mild, but those softly-spoken words were disturbing, fascinating, clarifying. I can still see, these seventeen years later, his final examination before me: two long sections of names and doctrines waiting to be appropriately matched; then the pleasure of setting down some of the results of his teaching in essay form. I had determined that this gentleman-scholar who had given to me all semester must have nothing but my best in return. Dr. Stanley Olsen's class gave me the foundation knowledge of world religions. As I walked through India years later, I often reflected on his teachings. But I received an even more important gift: the knowledge of what it means to be an educated person. Dr. Olsen taught, by his own life, that "The entire object of a true education is to make men not merely do the right things, not merely learned but to love knowledge, not merely industrious but to love industry, not merely just to thirst after justice"(John Ruskin).

Sandra Looney

## **Thanks To Our Colleague - Stanley L. Olsen**

Thanks, Stanley, for the encouraging words that you gave me and other younger colleagues who stood in awe of your reputation.

Thanks for inspiring us with your commitment to the teaching craft. Despite heavy teaching and committee assignments your goal was to be freshly prepared for each class.

Thanks for fostering among us both “idealism” and “a sober self-criticism” that unmask pretensions and exaggerated claims of achievement.

Thanks for your love of the potential of students that enabled you to call forth the best that is in them. “Fuzzy” Pearson, former district president of the South Dakota District said it well: “Stanley Olsen has that ability to “stretch” students out without letting them “snap.”

Thanks to Grace and Marilyn and Curt for sharing your time with us. The quiet, probing cadence of your speech will forever echo in the halls of Augustana.

Thanks for the vision of the Christian, liberal arts college that you embodied among us in careful words and gentle example. At the same time that you clarified the tension between critical inquiry and faith and warned us about superficial answers, you encouraged us to seek new relationships and understandings between disparate ideas and disciplines. You were a welcome gadfly in all of the areas of the college - in the halls of the natural sciences and the social sciences as well as the humanities. You taught us to be committed to and yet critical of our respective disciplines, concerned not only for the well being of our departments but also for the goals of the college as a whole. From you we learned that Church and college, though they are not the same, can share a mission and walk together with mutual benefit.

Thanks for asking questions among us like Socrates of old, and for encouraging us to reflect about the “deep” of things. Do you remember that chapel talk that you gave once on “knowledge”? Dimly I recall the careful way in which you distinguished between knowledge of

“objects” and knowledge of “persons”. In addition you noted the difference between knowing another person and being known by another. The deepest knowledge, as you emphasized, is the knowledge that comes when one is known by God. The writer of the 139th Psalm referred to this kind of knowledge when he exclaimed: “O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me.”

Though the details of that talk are dimmed by the distance of years, I can never forget your final words, Stanley. “Such knowledge,” you said, “is too wonderful for me.” Now you are embraced in that deepest knowledge.

And thanks to you Lord, for knowing Augustana through our colleague and your servant, Stanley. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us.

3/13/79

Arthur L. Olsen

## **A Tribute to Stanley Olsen**

by Don Fryxell

History records the accomplishments of those who have affected for better or worse our world; it ignores men and women who are frequently greater human beings than those we read about. Augustana has been blessed with a number of these persons, and one of the greatest is the man whose memory we honor today—Stanley Olsen. I knew Stanley for over twenty-five years as a colleague, a friend, a golf partner. I could beat him in golf, but I could never beat him as a human being.

George Meredith once commented that the right use of living is to pave firmer footpaths for those who come after us. In his life Stanley embodied that ideal. His thousands of former students can attest to his greatness as a teacher, and although they may not recognize the fact themselves, unconsciously they know that Stanley helped to make them better human beings. The sharpness of his mind, the range of his knowledge, the brilliance of his lectures, his dedication to the liberal arts made their impressions upon his students. Grace and Stanley served as hosts to hundreds of students before, while, and after their children, Marilyn and Curt, attended Augustana, and even after Stanley retired, his former students stopped by to see this man whom they greatly admired. I know of no teacher at Augustana who was more highly respected by his colleagues than Stanley. He fought for them and with them. He insisted that the primary function of a college should be to educate students rather than to train them for this or that particular job, and he sought to make Augustana the greatest Christian liberal arts college in the country. Members of the various congregations in which Stanley served as minister knew, as we at Augustana did, that this man was a true man of God. To know him was to love him.

Great teacher, great scholar, great husband, great father, great human being—Stanley will not and can not be forgotten. He will live on in our memories. We know that our lives have

been made better because we have been privileged to know him, and we thank God for him.

Glory to God for Stanley Olsen.

## Hebrews 12:1-2

Such a cloud of witnesses surround us!  
Faithful people who have not spared themselves  
to bring the gospel clearly  
in the classroom  
in churches where God's people gather  
in home and community  
We mourn such a witness today  
We stand at the edge of the river of death  
It's as far as we can go today, but  
With ears of faith, we hear the  
trumpets sound for him on the  
other side.

And yet in mourning we rejoice and thank God  
for the witness that has been and still  
is in our midst  
for the hope that we share today  
He cannot come to us,  
but we shall go to him, to join  
him before the throne of grace and glory.

So we turn our eyes to the One who gave us  
this hope  
Looking to Jesus, the pioneer and  
perfector of our faith  
It is He who gives us the courage and  
wisdom to persevere  
For the joy set before Him, He faced death  
and now reigns in glory.

We share that hope.  
Therefore, let us live as those who are  
about the King's business  
Ambassadors - witnesses for the faith  
in fears, trials, temptations, sorrows  
yet knowing His promise that He will  
never leave us or forsake us  
Even in the very valley of the shadow  
of death, His rod and His staff  
comfort us.  
He, our gracious and loving Lord and Savior  
is at our side. Here now - and later  
in glory.

Orvis Hanson

We give thanks Father for the life of Stanley and for the many ways that our lives have been touched and enriched by his love and friendship, by his work and service. We give thanks for his grace and goodness—for the eloquent and moving testimony of his teaching and life, for his faithful love to the many students and colleagues with whom he so generously shared himself.

We remember with thanksgiving his unique qualities—the beguiling sparkle of goodness in his eyes, his endearing chuckle of joy, his exceptional blend of critical spirit and sympathetic understanding, his contagious enthusiasm for life and learning, his profound wisdom and simple piety, his capacity to take the questions of the mind and heart seriously without taking himself too seriously, his genuine humility of mind and spirit, his honest inquiry of values worthy of whole-hearted commitment.

We cherish his love, his friendship, the inspiration of his example. O Father, be with all who mourn the loss of your servant, Stanley. Comfort us with your Spirit of love, strength us through the memory of the joyous life Stanley shared with us, and encourage us through the secure hope that someday we shall meet again through the resurrection of your dear Son, who taught us to pray—“Our Father...

Fred Klawiter

My first encounter with Stanley Olsen was in December of 1964. I was being considered for the presidency of Augustana College at the time and at the conclusion of one of the interviews on campus, I was directed to the driveway behind the Commons Building for a ride to the Sioux Falls Airport. My chauffeur that trip was Stanley Olsen, chairman of the Humanities Division. I never did learn how or why he was selected for this task - I only remember that I was impressed by this quiet, unassuming man who radiated love of and support for Augustana College. I remember from that ride his concern for the liberal arts - perhaps he felt the need to make this Academic Dean from a state school in Minnesota realize their importance! If so, he succeeded in making me aware of his concerns for his college.

My last encounter with Stanley Olsen was in December of 1978—14 years from my first, when a group of us went to his home to present him with a certificate honoring him as a former president of the Lutheran Faculties Association.

These two encounters underscore what Stanley meant to Augustana College—the first a concern for the liberalizing of man’s life through the humanities and Christian teachings; the second a recognition of his interest in effective teaching at the Lutheran heritage.

It was individuals like Stanley Olsen that built Augustana to the prominence in Christian Higher Education that it enjoys today. In the files in my office there is a letter from a graduate written before my time at Augustana who wrote that he had heard there was a possibility that Dr. Stanley Olsen might be leaving Augustana College. He wanted it known that this would be a great calamity for the college, since no person on the faculty was more effective in his total impact and influence upon the students who attended his courses.

When it came time for Stan to actively retire from the faculty—he never did really retire from Augustana College—he wrote to me the following:

“Augustana has been good to me over the years. I have regarded teaching at Augustana to be a high privilege. As you know, I have taught in the areas of both religion and philosophy. This means that I have had the unusual opportunity of continually broadening my field of interest, resulting in increased opportunities for personal enrichment and service. This has made teaching an exciting experience. Not least have I enjoyed working with a faculty whose high academic competence is matched with an equally high sense of dedication to the school. I do not think anyone on the staff has reason to feel deeper sense of satisfaction than I for having been connected with Augustana these many years.”

Stanley Olsen was good for and to Augustana College. He will be missed but his legacy will carry on - a guide to those of us still working in God’s vineyard of Christian Higher Education. To me, Dr. Stanley Olsen “Stan” can rightly be referred to as “MR. AUGUSTANA.”

Charles Balcer

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**A Tribute to Stanley Olsen  
(1904-1979)**

To a far greater extent than is often realized, the character of an institution is shaped by the people who serve it. Perhaps no one has left a more distinguished imprint on Augustana than Stanley Olsen, who lived among us for 42 years.

Broadly educated in the liberal arts and deeply committed to the Judeo-Christian tradition, Stanley combined critical toughness with sympathetic understanding, appreciation for other philosophies and heritages with allegiance to his own. He was a giant among men of no mean stature, beloved by students, respected by colleagues, and esteemed by all.

As a teacher, Stanley was superb. His lectures were clear and fresh and sprinkled with humor. We who were privileged to attend his classes were awed by his fullness of understanding and breadth of comprehension; we were enthralled by those sparkling blue eyes, his infectious enthusiasm, and agility of mind; we found ourselves wanting to learn what he found so absorbing.

By word and example, Stanley taught us to respect scholarship and to prize excellence. Always mindful of the sometimes painful process of intellectual growth, and patient of those whose powers of understanding could never match his own, this wise but plainspoken man captured the hearts of two generations of students, stretched their minds, and released them from self-imposed limitations.

A man of deep humility, Stanley was embarrassed by praise. He could never bring himself to believe that he was the moral and intellectual pillar others knew him to be. Like all wise men, he was wiser than he knew.

Never one to dwell on his own accomplishments, he gloried in the achievements of his students. Having returned from the hospital last fall, stricken with cancer that would soon claim his life, Stanley had at his bedside a doctoral dissertation just written by one of his students of a decade ago. Too weak to read himself, he proudly handed it to me. As I turned the pages, I glanced at Stanley. His face was aglow. His last, slow walk to campus was to deposit that volume in our library and to record its completion in the Alumni Office.

Such a man was Stanley Olsen, beloved teacher, admired colleague and friend. His passing closes a chapter in the life of the college. His legacy is his life, and that will remain a benchmark by which we measure that adequacy of our own.

LaMoyne Pederson, Chairman  
Department of Philosophy