

DENNIS W. PRATT EULOGY

October 18, 2005

By Ron Spielman

In the past several weeks during one of our meetings in a waiting area at the UW Hospital, we discussed the award Denny was to receive from the UW Platteville for a lifetime of support for education. Donna had every intention of attending Friday night and proudly accepting the award on Denny's behalf. So, we discussed some of our personal reflections on Denny as an educator. Denny was an educator his entire life! Not just in the classroom setting but in his daily life as he taught "life's lessons" to faculty, students, scouts and friends. Denny admitted that he struggled in the classroom setting from his days in the Lutheran grade school, through academic adversity at UW Platteville and in the pursuit of his Master's degree to achieve his goal to serve as an administrator. Throughout all his years as a student, Denny exhibited the perseverance necessary for all of us to live our lives to the fullest to achieve our goals, and to utilize the skills that we have been given.

In school and in his everyday life, Denny empathized with students and young people who were struggling. When Denny was awarded the OA Vigil Honor he was named: "big brother." That was over 40 years ago, and since then he has been big brother to many people who sit here today. Students and scouts with low self-esteem often received special attention from Denny as he helped them to be successful. . . . at something... at anything in order to build those foundation blocks upon which we all build our own self esteem.

Educators like Lee Binkley, Tom Howe, Bill Kline, Mike Beeth, Dick Reynolds, Dave Fetty, and now Kevin Schmidt on the Navaho Indian Reservation are positive influences on the lives of thousands of students because they themselves were first influenced by the teachings of Denny Pratt.

I recently heard a quote that instantly reminded me of Denny as an educatorand as a human being. Essentially, the quote said that 'we should not walk miles to preach a sermon. Rather - our walking should be our sermon. We all received many sermons while walking with Denny, as part of his family, his extended family, his scouting family, at his beloved UW Platteville, and here at Grace Lutheran Church. At the time we may not have recognized we were receiving a sermon and most times, the sermon was in Denny's deeds.

In the past few days I have received many emails and phone calls from Denny's extended family. I received an email from Japan from Brian Masshardt. Brian reminded me of one of Denny's quotes that was shared each Sunday evening at Canyon Camp. Denny used to tell the scouts and the staff "it shall be as you shall have it."

Denny leaves us with many positive memories. In difficult times Denny was often there with his encouragement and support. Now we must move forward without Denny. As we leave today, we must strive to live our daily lives always mindful of Denny's guidance- "it shall be as you shall have it."