

A TOAST TO CHARLES H. BACKSTROM ON HIS RETIREMENT

by his son Brian

on behalf of all the Backstrom children

February 16, 1997

I thought it would be nice to start this toast to Dad by reading the dictionary definition of "TEACHER." But in true circular fashion, all it said there was "one who teaches." Under just "TEACH," however, I found a good starting place: "**TEACH – any manner of imparting information or skill so that others may learn.**"

Friday night at the University's retirement party, we heard a lot about how Dad's formal instruction had benefited many people – his students, his colleagues, readers of his books and articles.

For us, though – friends and family – you have done more than *instruct*, Dad. You have **taught** us. You have helped give us the skills that allow us to learn. You have taught us through your work as a parent and a friend, as well as a professor. You have instilled in us, largely by example, wonderful and important lessons about life:

- We now know the tremendous value of cleaning out our homes and our offices more often than once every 35 years.
- We know that mixing together powdered skim milk, orange pop, peanut butter, chocolate powder, wheat germ, and yogurt – something you affectionately called "peanut butter soup" and claimed as your favorite snack – really won't add anything to our lives but nausea and intestinal distress.
- And now we really understand, again by your example, that an 8-foot length of fencepost lumber just doesn't fit into a car with only 7 feet of room – unless you push really hard and don't care too much about your windshield.

There is more, of course. Your teaching – giving us the skills to learn – has paid off in ways you probably didn't imagine:

- v You have taught us, by example, that dedication to our work and enjoyment of doing the right job adds a rewarding side to our lives.
- v We know that listening to and respecting the opinions of others expands our understanding and acceptance of the world's differences.
- v And with Mom, you have taught us the unbelievable value of family, to believe in ourselves and in others, and to love unconditionally.

And so, if the University's tribute to your professional career wasn't enough, just look at what your teaching has helped achieve for your four children: we're each happily married to truly wonderful people, each raising great families of our own, each enjoying our jobs. We're honest. Church plays a role in each of our lives. And we all value the ongoing challenge to improve ourselves.

And, importantly, none of us has broken our windshield by shoving a fencepost through it.

Your teaching helped get us all here.

Retirement lets you write a great new chapter in your life – complete with relaxation and opportunities you haven't had before. Enjoy it, and look forward to the pleasure of seeing the results of your teaching in your students, your writings, your colleagues, and your friends.

And watch us kids and our own children continue to live the Family Album you have been writing so marvelously all your life. Congratulations, and thanks.