THANK YOU all for coming. What a hearty expression of tribute to Glen Nygreen.

I am the only son of Glen Nygreen. I grew up with him -- literally.

One of my earliest experiences includes asking "Dad, can I sleep over at Johnnie's on Saturday?" and not getting a simple YES or NO answer. Instead, Glen embarked on Socratic questioning, making me answer the question by thinking about various issues and drawing the answer out. Just like a DEAN!

I also remember learning to drive a car. Age 15 in rural Ohio. Nervously driving a huge vehicle. "Dad, how am I doing?" "Fine, keep going." "Which way should I turn at this stop sign?" "You're the driver; you choose."

There was seldom a simple YES or NO answer with Glen. Always Socratic questioning. Forcing me – the student – to become independent and make my own decisions.

I envied the other boys who got simple YES/NO answers from their fathers…

Glen's life was RICH and FULL.

It was a life dedicated to the service of others.

Re-read his obituary and you'll see how many volunteer service organizations he worked with over his long adult life.

Even though I lived through it over the years, I am still amazed when I look back at all the organizations he worked for, holding officer positions in all of them.

My father had values and he adhered to them all his life. He was virtuous; he didn't smoke or drink. He didn't use profanity. He didn't argue – not even with my mother. I remember when Mom would get mad at him – but he didn't shout back. He was a peacemaker.

The burden I bear is such a virtuous father. VERY hard to live up to.

Glen was honest, a straight arrow, upstanding, ethical, "pure." I honestly never knew of anything he did that was "bad" or "wrong" or embarrassing.

Glen was national president of SAE. The Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity has a Creed called the True Gentleman.

This is a beautifully succinct definition. People have told me that nobody lives up to this better than Glen Nygreen:

The True Gentleman is the man whose conduct proceeds from good will and an acute sense of propriety, and whose self-control is equal to all emergencies; who does not make the poor man conscious of his poverty, the obscure man of his obscurity, or any man of his inferiority or deformity; who is himself humbled if necessity compels him to humble another; who does not flatter wealth, cringe before power, or boast of his own possessions or achievements; who speaks with frankness but always with sincerity and sympathy; whose deed follows his word; who thinks of the rights and feelings of others, rather than his own; and who appears well in any company, a man with whom honor is sacred and virtue safe.

A fitting description of Glen T. Nygreen: True Gentleman.

Another theme that I grew up with is Glen's definition of "success." As you might expect, it has nothing to do with wealth or fame. Glen wrote about his career in education:

"My professional life has been spent as an administrator of colleges… I have had fun and challenge wherever I have been. That seems to me to be what success is all about... It isn't about money or public acclaim or high status that counts, after all, but rather the evidence of responsibility and service in whatever you have undertaken."

Indeed, his life was service-oriented.

Those of us close to Glen saw aging gradually take its toll over the past few years. Inevitably.

Frail.

Energy levels much decreased.

Memory failing (well, most of us suffer from that affliction…)

But Glen remained keen and vital and interested in intellectual and social progress. Even though his body and mind were slowed by age, he stayed engaged and involved as best he could.

He had a bumper sticker on the car: **Do justice, Seek peace, Build community**

In fact, PEACE was Glen's consistent message:

He especially liked to quote one of the Beatitudes, blessings from Jesus recorded in the Sermon on the Mount: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."*

In his published writings in 1985 and again in 2003, Glen wrote *"Is not the making of peace the premier task of our time?"*

That's a fitting memory of Glen – a lifelong peacemaker.

I miss him. But I have wonderful memories and I have towering goals to aspire to. In fact, we can all commit to those goals – each of us striving to achieve Glen Nygreen's level of GOODNESS and SERVICE in the world.

That way, we can all carry on his mission.

Ted Nygreen  
May 6, 2010