

Funeral – Tilman Treangen
November 12, 2011
Zumbro Lutheran Church
Pastor Vern Christopherson

Kathy, Jeff, Abby, Brandon, Sally, family and friends, grace and peace to you from the one who lived for us, who died for us, and who now claims victory over every grave, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

When I sat down with the family to plan today's service, Sally brought along some pictures. There were pictures of flowers in full bloom in Tilman's yard. There were pictures of a 2½ mile hike to cousin Harry's cabin in Norway and a magnificent overlook of Oslo. There was a picture of Harry and Tilman all gussied up in western shirts and looking rather proud of themselves.

There was one more picture in the group that stood out for me. It was Tilman standing next to a grave in Sokna, Norway. The Treangen family church was in the background.. There was a name on the gravestone: Andreas Treangen, who was Harry's father. Underneath the name, in big, bold lettering, were the words: *Tak for alt*: thanks for everything.

Tak for alt. That sounds like Tilman to me. It was the way he lived his life: grateful. Kathy describes him as humble, easy going, patriotic, fun loving, a real jokester. You had to be on your toes to figure out if he was being serious or not. Tilman loved his family: the singing of Abby, the guitars of Brandon. He embraced the life he'd been given. He celebrated every day of it.

Tak for alt. Tilman was born on a farm in Houston County in December of 1929. It was just a couple of months after the collapse of the stock market. The Great Depression had begun. The family had to everything they possibly could to hang on to

the farm and make ends meet. Tilman was the fourth of five children. All of them pitched in and helped. Along the way, they learned lessons of hard work and perseverance and the value of a dollar.

Tak for alt. Tilman went to country school. He had spoken only Norwegian while growing up, but fortunately his cousin was the schoolteacher, so Tilman had his own personal translator as he began his classes. The school was on the Kelly Farm. They referred to it as the “Kelly College.” Tilman used to walk to school by cutting across the pasture. There’s no word on whether it was uphill both ways or not.

Tilman went to school through 8th grade. After that, he helped out on the farm. In 1952 he was drafted into the Army. The United States was involved in the Korean conflict. Tilman was stationed in Korea above the 38th parallel. He served his country bravely and honorably. After being discharged from the Army, he came back to the farm. He got a job working for a nearby implement dealer in the town of Mabel.

Tak for alt. Tilman eventually was hired by the Kepp Company in Rochester. They specialized in installing underground utility cables. Tilman ran a backhoe at first. Eventually he worked his way up to a management position. He was a good manager. When problems came up—and they routinely did—he was even-tempered and unflappable.

For instance, there was the time someone failed to tell them about an underground water main right in the middle of where they were digging. They ended up slicing it open. Since no one knew how to shut it off, they drained the entire city water tower. That’s the kind of pressure Tilman dealt with everyday. And he was good at it.

Tak for alt. In the late 50s, Tilman met a young woman named Verna Thomte. She was from Lewiston. They got introduced at a restaurant in Fountain. Verna was in a band that was playing at the restaurant. She was playing a Gibson electric guitar. Tilman did a little strumming himself, so they had an immediate connection. A few years later—in June of 1962—these two were married at a church in Lewiston. Tilman referred to himself as a late bloomer. He was 32-years-old. Verna was 28.

Tak for alt. Tilman's work with underground utilities took him far and wide: Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota. Daughter Kathy ended up being born in St. Cloud. After awhile they moved to Winona. And then on to Rochester. Because of the unpredictable nature of the work, and because of some family issues, Kathy ended up being raised by her grandparents in Rushford. Tilman kept in touch as much as possible, but he was typically gone from May to November.

Tak for alt. Tilman had a keen interest in his heritage. His family was from Norway. His great-grandfather came to this country via Quebec. Ellis Island was not yet in existence. When they entered the country, the family was planning on changing their name to Christenson, but then they thought the better of it. They were concerned that if they changed their names, no one in Norway would ever be able to get in touch of them.

Sure enough, this turned out to be a wise move. Many years later, a relative in Spring Grove, Emma Landson, decided to put an ad in the newspaper in Honnafus, Norway. She was looking for any Treangens in the area. It wasn't long before she got a phone call from a Harry Treangen. When Harry discovered that he had relatives in America, he started to cry. It wasn't long before Harry was making plans to visit Emma and her husband, . And while he was here, he got introduced to his cousin, Tilman.

Harry and Tilman hit it off immediately. They formed a bond that continued to this day. They talked on the phone weekly, in Norwegian, and regularly visited each other's countries.

Tak for alt. Verna died of leukemia in August of 1991. Tilman was on his own for a number of years. Then one day he met Sally Bates, a woman who had lost her husband in September of 1991. They met at a dance at the VFW here in town. Sally had never been to a VFW before, but she'd gone to see the White Lightning Band. She was sitting by herself at a table. A stranger walked up and asked her to dance. Her immediate response was, "On no, I haven't danced in 30 years." Normally, Tilman would have taken *no* for an answer, but this time was different. He stayed right where he was and asked her again: "Ma'am, I'd really like to have a dance with you."

Pretty soon they were out on the dance floor. Tilman did a beautiful polka, foxtrot, and waltz. But then it came time for the two-step. Tilman was clearly not good at the two-step. That was unfortunate, because the man is really supposed to take the lead. It just wasn't working. Sometime later, Tilman stopped by Sally's home. He asked her for help in figuring out the two-step. Sally was relieved. Their dancing got quite a bit better. These two went on to become dance partners—and very close friends—for the last 15 years.

Tak for alt. Tilman slowed down the past couple years. His mind was working just fine, but his legs weren't cooperating. He still loved dancing, but there were fewer trips to the dance hall. And when he did manage to get there, three or four dances was about all he could do.

Tilman died on November 1, All Saints Day, the day we honor and remember those saints who have gone before us in the faith. It's hard to think about saying goodbye. Then again, All Saints Day is a reminder that ultimately we do not belong to each to each other, we belong to God. We are God's very own children. God has reached out to us in Jesus, and loved us with a love that not even death can destroy. Because of the cross and resurrection, we are promised a place with all the other saints of God. We are promised a world with singing and feasting and dancing, a world in which God will make all things new. *Tak for alt*: thanks for everything. Amen.