

December 13, 2004

Dearest Uncle Carsten,

I'm sitting at the computer and thinking of you, my favorite uncle (you always have been - you always will be). I may not have a chance to sit and talk with you again so this letter will be a one sided conversation, which has the advantage that you won't be able to argue with me! Okay argue, if it makes you feel better.

Growing up in the Borglum clan has shaped my life in ways that became apparent as I plowed my own way into adulthood. Not every child had grandparents that were a bicycle ride away. Not every niece and nephew had an aunt and uncle who tolerated volumes of noise and rambunctious behavior (who wouldn't want to run and shout after being packed 5 across in the back seat of the Oldsmobile for an hour?), who gave us meaningful work and paid us to do it, who took us on their family vacations, who welcomed us into their home for cousin exchanges. Not every family celebrated holidays together - kids in the kitchen (with Tante joining us) - adults in the dining room. Laughter coming from every room. Wow, do I remember some fantastic dinners together. I'm glad I wasn't a vegetarian then!

For your kids, coming to the farm gave them the opportunities to run through the corn field, drive a tractor, chase pigeons in the barn and throw rocks in 'cow plops'. For us, staying with your family was a chance to see how another household functioned. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the summer days spent at Webster Rd. Marge took us to the library, to concerts, to a rodeo, to museums, to plays. How much better could it have been for a country kid!

I was so happy to have a job at the Sausage Shop during the summer of 1966 just after I'd graduated from high school. The pop tune on the radio that summer had the lyrics "Hot town, summer in the city". I thought it was written for me! I felt needed and capable (you may insert a bit of silent arguing here) and grown up (ditto). It was an honor to work with you and Marge and the other hard working people in the store. You never asked us to do something you yourself wouldn't do. I remember clearly the evening when two elderly women came to the store for "Ein-viertel pfund schinken" thirty minutes after the store had closed. You saw them as they turned to walk away and told us to open the store. That would not happen at any market today. You had loyal, faithful customers because they received quality goods and service. Danke - mange tusind tak - thank you for placing your trust in me.

Growing up with my own hardworking parents has encouraged a life of being thrifty and careful with money. From you and them, I learned to give full value in all my efforts and to expect fair measure in return. We were recycling long before the word was invented. Mom would rinse out the wax papers that lined cereal boxes, hang them on the clothesline to dry and then wrap our lunch box sandwiches in them - multiple times. Their and your influence has spread: Ed rinses out Saranwrap and hangs it on the clothesline for reuse (I am not making this up - nor did I ever suggest it!). Make do, patch, repair, use it again, do without.

As I mentioned on the phone, when our families were together, we had a chance to see another side of our father. Dad laughed more, smiled more, joked more when he was with you. In my mind's eye, I can see you both walking on wobbly stilts across our uneven lawn. In my mind's eye, I can see Dad water-skiing at Big Moose without his teeth. Mom panicked when he got out of the boat - she wasn't aware that he'd taken them out!

Family loyalty was something that was very important to Dad. I count my siblings as my best friends and I treasure our time together. I know that you were Dad's best friend. (He would be 86 today.) You have been a supportive, loyal brother.

The family reunion this summer reminded me of how much I cherish this great big, wonderful, rollicking Borglum family. I absolutely loved spending time with your grown up kids (well, there were a few less than memorable moments....the wiener in the cake was pretty tacky. I'm guessing it was Ken's idea.) Your six are a fun loving, caring brood. The Greger Borglum kids were quieter and more restrained than the Carsten Borglums. We could count on having an uproarious time when we were with your family. We still can. Count me in!

This comes as no surprise that at least some of the time I liked you and Marge better than my own parents. The grass is always greener, right? One of the lessons that I learned from staying in your home was that your kids had jobs, chores, expectations - and those tasks were just as unreasonable as the ones we had! This was a good lesson - you were as demanding as my parents!!!!

I think of you every day and hold you close to my heart, Uncle Cars. I know that you don't believe in an after life and neither do I. We have to make our own heaven on earth by living our lives honestly, with conviction, kindness and compassion. You have lived your life well and I am honored and humbled to be your loving niece.

Linda