The Olsen Family

Gordon T. Olsen was born into a Christian home on March 5, 1910 at Woodville, Wisconsin. Three years later the family moved to Saskatchewan, Canada where they homesteaded and became wheat farmers. When he was fourteen years of age, Gordon made his way to Northwest Nazarene College where he enrolled in the academy. Nearly broke, he worked his way through school. In 1934 he graduated with high honors from NNC with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

He served as Superintendent of Schools in Star, Idaho for five years, operated a grocery store in Boise and served as business manager at Boise Junior College. Crippled by polio as a child, he was unable to enlist in the armed service during World War II so he and his family moved to Portland, Oregon where he was payroll supervisor for Kaiser Shipyards and was employed by the War Manpower Commission. Following the war, he went into the commercial refrigeration business in Eugene, Oregon and developed several furniture and appliance stores in Southern Oregon. He later was successfully involved in real estate investments.

Rhoda Barbezat, whose father was a preacher, was raised in Filer, Idaho but spent one year at Asbury College before enrolling at NNC where she met Gordon. They were married in 1933 and had two sons, Gordon and Galen, both of whom graduated from Northwest Nazarene College and were listed in Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities.

The family was intensely involved in serving the Church of the Nazarene in a variety of assignments. For fifteen years Rhoda was Oregon Pacific District Missionary President and served as International President from 1964 to 1972. Gordon was recognized as an outstanding and highly successful Sunday School Superintendent and served for many years on the District Advisory Board; for nearly twenty years he was a member of the General Board, serving as Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Gordon was awarded the Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree by Northwest Nazarene College on whose Board of Regents he served for thirty-one years. Following his death on February 23, 1977, a married student housing complex on the NNC campus was named in his memory.

Galen returned to NNC and served as Business Manager for several years; both he and his brother Gordon were members of the Board of Regents at the same time.

Criteria for awarding of scholarships

1. Scholarships are to be awarded to students enrolled in one of the majors offered by the Department of Business.
2. Recipients and amounts are to be recommended by the faculty of the Department of Business.
3. The total dollars awarded will be dependent on funds available from the earnings of the Olsen Family Endowment.
4. Scholarships are to be awarded to students who have demonstrated quality performance and potential.
5. The general requirements for full-time student status and a minimum 2.0 GPA apply.

A most satisfying way to honor a loved one or friend is to invest in a life yet to be lived. Gifts to NNC's Endowed Scholarship Program become a "helping hand" to students as they prepare for their vocations and for lives of service to others. For more information, contact the Development Office, NNC, 623 Holly St., Nampa, ID 83686. Phone (208) 467-8842.