

'We shall not see one like him again'

Elder Maxwell's life lauded by LDS leaders and his son

By Carrie A. Moore, Deseret News

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President Gordon B. Hinckley and Colleen Maxwell share a few words at Elder Maxwell's services held Tuesday in the Tabernacle. (Michael Brandy, Deseret Morning News)

With his empty chair on the Tabernacle dais a stark reminder that death doesn't discriminate, Elder Neal A. Maxwell was eulogized Tuesday on Temple Square by the men who knew him best: top leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and his son, Cory.

It has been 10 years and five months since a member of the church's Quorum of the Twelve has died, and when Elder Maxwell passed away July 21 at his home after a protracted battle with leukemia, the men who have become more than mere friends lost one of their own.

"For years we have lived together in love," prayed Elder Russell M. Nelson, a fellow apostle who opened the funeral service. "For days, we have shared tears."

President Boyd K. Packer, acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve, said during the decade-plus without a death in the group, quorum members have "grown in unity, experience and age," exhibiting a "spirit of dedication and brotherhood" that its members have mentioned periodically in public.

He told of the last meeting the quorum had before Elder Maxwell died, noting how, as he encountered 98-year-old Elder David B. Haight, Elder Maxwell raised his cane toward his friend in a fencing gesture, "on guard!" Elder Haight responded, and "there was a fencing match of sorts. It broke off without bloodshed on either side," President Packer said, smiling at the memory.

President James E. Faust, second counselor in the First Presidency, remembered Elder Maxwell's example of faith and dedication, particularly as his illness progressed and his suffering increased.

"He spoke often of the quality of meekness. In his own suffering, he came to a total discipleship purged of any personal ego," he said.

Elder Maxwell was first diagnosed with leukemia in 1996. Treatment led to remission until 1998, when he relapsed. President Faust said he served as an inspiration not only for his fellow apostles and church leaders, but for hundreds of cancer patients who were the recipients of his personal kindness and caring.

President Thomas S. Monson, first counselor in the First Presidency, called him a "giant among men. . . . To those who heard his sermons, read his writings or came within the scope of his influence, Neal Maxwell became a part of the family."

He recalled a note Elder Maxwell gave him years ago during a church meeting they were presiding over, which said simply, "Tom, I love you. Neal."

As one whose faith and dedication to God carried him forward despite growing health challenges,



Family members file into the Tabernacle for funeral services for Elder Neal A. Maxwell. (Jason Olson, Deseret Morning News)

Elder Maxwell "accomplished more in these last eight years than most men do in a lifetime," said LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley. He praised Elder Maxwell's signature speaking and writing style.

"I know of no other man who spoke in such an interesting and distinct manner. His genius was the product of diligence. He was a perfectionist determined to exact from every phrase and sentence" vivid imagery that brought the gospel to life. "Each talk was a masterpiece, each book was a work of art. I think we shall not see one like him again."

Elder Maxwell had the meekness and charity to bind "up the wounds and (bring) sunlight into the lives" of fellow cancer sufferers, yet he was fearless in challenging "the proud and the arrogant."

President Hinckley spoke directly to Colleen Hinckley Maxwell, telling her and the couple's children to continue their journey forward with faith. He encouraged Sister Maxwell to carry on "through this utter valley of desolation" that comes to those who lose a beloved spouse. President Hinckley, who lost his wife, Marjorie, in April, said no one who has not experienced it can understand the "absolute devastation and consuming loneliness, which increases in intensity and gnaws at one's very soul."

Yet in the darkest nights, there comes a voice that whispers "all is well, all is well, with a peace, certainty and unwavering affirmation that death is not the end" and that "as surely as there has been separation, there will be a joyful reuniting."

He assured Elder Maxwell's family that death had not been a bitter experience for their husband and father.

"He has not tasted death. It's been a welcome release from the pains of mortality to the glory of immortality," President Hinckley said.

Cory Maxwell said his father led his family by example and by faith, giving his best efforts in creating a storehouse of memories that they can cherish by spending time with them.

"He understood the importance of family in the Plan of Salvation," and liked to say the family is "a celestial institution formed outside telestial time," he said.

Elder Maxwell told his family some time ago that his own father had "taught him how to die" by remaining interested and in good humor until the end. Recently as his wife talked to him, he had difficulty hearing her. When she asked if he had both his hearing aids in place, he replied, "Yes, and if I could put a third one in I would."

Colleen Maxwell was her husband's most trusted confidant and adviser.

"Dad always said he married up spiritually, and I believe his compassionate service to many people over many years became reflexive because of what he saw my mother do," Cory Maxwell said.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir provided music for the funeral, which will be televised on tape delay on several broadcast venues, including locally at 10 a.m. Sunday on KSL-TV. (See www.lds.org for a full listing of times and channels.) Private graveside services were held in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

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