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A TRIBUTE TO PETER POPOVICH

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As we go through life, sometimes we get good breaks and sometimes bad breaks. These breaks can occur in all sorts of situations. When I think of Peter Popovich, a good example comes to mind. How many people are fortunate enough to have a really good neighbor? We cannot always choose our neighbors, so when we get a really good one, that is a good break. In terms of neighbors, we have been fortunate. In the twenty-six years that we have been neighbors of Pete Popovich, his father, and now his dear wife, Gail, we have had nothing but good experiences—and by “we” I mean my wife, Karen and our children.

When we have needed help, Pete has been there to help us. When we wanted to hear about the old country and what it was like to be an immigrant moving to the United States, we had the great privilege of being able to spend time with Peter’s wonderful dad. When we have needed an insight into how the legislature, school boards or the court system operate, what better teacher could we have had than Peter Popovich?

Perhaps the most important characteristics about Peter Popovich are his kindness, his goodness, and his integrity. A good example of Peter Popovich, the human being, comes to mind when I think about the skating arena which Peter, Dick Cool, and my wife and I built for the children who live in the St. Croix Valley area. Although Peter had no children who were of an age to use the arena, Peter was the first one to say, “Let’s do it, and let’s do it right.”

We had been talking from time to time about the fact that there were many families in the St. Croix Valley area whose income level was below the Twin Cities average and that the children in those families did not have the same recreational opportunities during the wintertime as the children who lived in Edina, Roseville or even the core cities. Pete led the way and put his time and his money on the line to help build a

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wonderful facility. Of course, the facility of which I speak is the St. Croix Valley Youth Center, an indoor/outdoor skating rink located in St. Mary's Point. When I think of the many young people who, but for that facility, would have been heading down the wrong track, I cannot help but remember just how smart Peter Popovich was when he encouraged all of us to move forward.

Pete is the kind of person who, if we needed help with a family problem, was always there. I recall the time my wife, Karen, and I were on a business trip to Phoenix and we received a call from Peter Popovich late at night. Our youngest daughter, Julie, who was a toddler, had put her finger between the chain and spokes of an exercycle, nearly cutting off her finger. Peter rushed Julie to the hospital, stayed with her, and saw to it that she received the proper care.

Another recollection of Peter comes to mind when I think about the love, understanding, patience, and time which he has had for his own children. Peter, when dealing with his family, whether it was his own father who lived with Peter until he died, or whether it was his own children, is a person who understands the importance of family and of loyalty to one's friends and family.

These three small examples taken from the life of Peter Popovich underline an important point. We all know about Peter Popovich the lawyer, Peter Popovich the judge, and Peter Popovich the hard-driving public executive who established our Court of Appeals and then went on to become Chief Justice of our Supreme Court. What many do not know is that Peter Popovich is a kind, loving, considerate person who exemplifies the best there is among humankind.