

What Do I Believe?

By Sally Zentner Schoessler '78

I believe in moments. They shape our minds, our hearts, our spirits and our lives. I came to St. Olaf College as an uncertain young woman with a strong sense of purpose and an alarming lack of confidence. Moments on the Hill shaped my path.

As a young nursing major and a woman of faith, I had a sense of mission that was fed through fellowship opportunities, interpersonal interactions and academic pursuits. In one moment, a friend's chapel talk shaped my world view as he defined the word *love* as "to give and to give and to give and to give and to give." In another moment I learned the gift of presence in my obstetrical nursing rotation as I held the hand of a frightened sixteen year old as she gave birth without benefit of the support of family or friend.

Many special moments were quiet and peaceful, including contemplative walks in Norway Valley. Other monumental moments included standing up for my singular beliefs in a religion class, finding surprising strength to engage in an intellectual pursuit coupled with a declaration of faith.

Moments shape our lives and touch our hearts. On a lovely spring evening walk outside of Rolvaag Library, I knew that I would spend my life with the young man that I walked beside - and still walk hand in hand with 29 years later. As it often does, life came around full circle two years ago when in a tearful moment I waved good-bye to our youngest daughter as she began her freshman year in Mohn Hall, fully aware that she was on the threshold of her own St. Olaf moments.

Moments change us. As St. Olaf became my history, new experiences molded my life. Those moments included the wonder at the birth of a child and the tears at saying farewell to a beloved father. I believe that moments in history have brought change to my life as well, most notably during the Jewish Passover more than 2000 years ago. In an instant of love and surrender, Christ died on the cross – and in that same moment saved my life. The realization of the meaning of that event and the timeless personal significance of it was nurtured and explored in my time at St. Olaf College.

Moments. They are the music that plays in our souls and the foundation that supports our future. One by one they take a tentative young girl and mold her into a woman of purpose, intention and strength. We grow by the choice of which moments in our past that we choose to embrace. Those of us fortunate to spend four years on Manitou Heights can benefit from recollection and reflection as we hold those moments dearly in our hearts.