

Anne Graham Lotz: Daddy Finished Well

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown" (2 Tim. 4:7-8a, NIV).

Until 7:30 a.m. on the morning of Feb. 21, when I received the news that Daddy had moved to heaven, I had enjoyed watching the Olympics. Besides being thrilling to me, from time to time I have been able to catch life-lessons from the competition.

One such life-lesson has emerged from the mist of grief over Daddy. It is the memory of the 5000-meter speedskating race that was held the opening weekend. The next to last pair of skaters to compete included a man named Sven Kramer. The announcer described him as a rock star in his native country, the Netherlands. When Sven had been asked how he felt about all of the adulation, he had replied that the people in his country were really good to him, and he loved what he did. He struck me as a genuine athlete who knew he was really good and didn't have to brag.

When his race was called, Sven Kramer walked out on the ice with the confidence of a man who owned it. He dug his skates into the starting position, then held absolutely still. When the starting gun went off, Sven Kramer began his race with smooth, powerful strides. He didn't even look like he was exerting maximum effort. Around and around the track he went as the announcer began to give the times in comparison to other skaters. When Sven crossed the finish line, he made it look easy. Then his time was announced: 6:09:76 minutes! He had set a new Olympic record! Not only had he won the gold medal for his race, but he had set two other Olympic records: one for having won a gold medal in the same event in three successive Olympics, and the other as the speed skater who has

won more Olympic medals than any other in history! Without any doubt, there is no one like Sven Kramer.

But the scene that brought tears to my eyes was not on the track, it was up in the stands. Because as Sven Kramer crossed the finish line, the camera panned across the crowd and focused on one man who was on his feet, wildly applauding. The announcer identified him as the king of the Netherlands.

And this is the life-lesson that came into focus for me. My father ran his race of life with grace and power. There has been no one, there is no one, and there will not ever be anyone like Billy Graham. He was a rock star in the kingdom of God who loved people and loved what he did ... telling them that there is a God in heaven who loves them, who sent Jesus, His own Son, to die for them, and that if they place their faith in Him, they would receive forgiveness for their sin, peace with God now and a heavenly home when they die.

On Wednesday morning, Daddy finished his race. The vision that has come to my mind's eye is that of the King, standing to applaud His runner who finished strong.

Well done, Daddy! Now there is in store for you the crown ...