Dedication Dinner Remarks, delivered for the Eberhard Center on April 29, 1988

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DEDICATION DINNER REMARKS

Over 25 years ago, about the time Grand Valley State College came into existence, Martin Luther King added "I have a dream" to the region of historic sentences. What we are celebrating tonight is the stuff our dreams are made of. The first people to have the Grand Valley dream are here, and those who helped make it a reality. Thank you Bill and Sally. Thank you Phil. Thank you Governor and Mrs. Romney for returning tonight to see the most recent consequences of the chain of events you set in motion many years ago.

My memory of the gestation period for the idea of a Downtown Center takes me back to a meeting with Deans and Faculty in the Board Room of Zumberge Library where I was urged to seek funding for a building to accommodate our classes in Grand Rapids. That was in the Spring of 1978. Only those of you most intimately involved in the life of Grand Valley will begin to quiver if September 1978 is mentioned in your presence. About the middle of that month I received notice that the roof of our field house could disintegrate at any moment. Our roof collapse coincided with Michigan's economic collapse, and what might be called our dark days began: a period of pain. Yet we doggedly fought with expert assistance in Lansing to fund and build a safe and expanded field house. The hope for a Downtown Center was nourished, but not acted upon. The nourishment came from an anonymous $600,000 gift through the midwifery of a close friend who happens to be a lawyer. The purpose of the gift - to advance academic programs in Grand Rapids. Two significant events followed. Our realtor identified a building for sale on Front Street near Fulton, and our Board of Control met to discuss a
future site in Grand Rapids. Rich DeVos, then a member of our Board, with his unusual ability to visualize the future, carried the day for the Fulton and Front Streets location.

At a luncheon at the Peninsular Club, Fred Hubbard and I put a deal in motion that is most simply understood by explaining to you that he made it possible through his and his associates' generosity for us to buy his warehouse on Front Street. We had the first of the five parcels we needed. Funds for their purchase were easier to attain than the parcels themselves. Jim Sebastian was the next willing Pen Club victim. What could Rich do after he was so instrumental in the site selection? After a pleasant dinner Pete Cook stood shoulder to shoulder with Rich. About that time the Little family gave us property west of town that we cashed in towards property in town, and our lawyer friend had another client who liked our cause. Then commenced a series of real estate negotiations more convoluted and drawn out than a mid east peace initiative. In the meantime our field house was completed in 1982, and we immediately launched our campaign in Lansing for a Downtown Center. The $20.9 million from the citizens of Michigan is the largest gift for this building. I am pleased that so many of their elected representatives are here tonight to receive our thanks. When the tax dollars were assured, we kicked off our Grand Design Campaign for private donations on January 11, 1985. What an exhilarating experience it has been to ask all of you for money. I have come away with much more than money. I have come away with friends; friends who were able to share in the vision of this place. Joyce Hecht, Paul Johnson and I will not quarrel with the Biblical truth that it is more blessed to give than receive, but I don't know how to describe our feeling upon receiving your gifts other than as a blessing. I know they will translate into a blessing for this community.
I will not reiterate the recognition given in the film, only affirm it and expand it to all of you in this room and many who are not here. What a team effort this has been outside and inside the institution. I cannot refrain, however, from mentioning the two people whose names are most prominently attached to this structure.

When Fred Meijer and I were young I asked him to help build a public television station in west Michigan. He agreed, and he has been helping ever since. There are over 26,000 donors to our public television stations. Fred was one of our first. It is natural and appropriate that these new studios and offices should be named the Meijer Broadcast Center. I am pleased that Fred was ready to make the commitment that brought this about, and once he did he added to the Meijer contribution by knocking on doors with Joyce, Paul, and me throughout west Michigan.

When I first mentioned this project to L.V. Eberhard I didn't think I'd get a dime. Then when he let us in to see him I thought maybe a dime might be it. That was the happiest miscalculation of my life. L.V., you made the New Year's holiday the best one in my memory. For those of us who raise funds at a still young university, a university not sated by wealth like some of our oldest, your gift is the realization of an impossible dream. I love your enthusiasm for this building and what it will do.

To you our donors and workers I make this financial report as we bring the Grand Design Campaign to a close. The campaign, launched in November 1985 with a goal of $6,100,000, and an expanded goal in 1987 to $6,800,000, we have received in cash and pledges $8,898,705.68.
Gifts raised beginning in 1979 for the purpose of purchasing and clearing the site $1,801,069. Other recent gifts to the University for programs in the downtown area, including the forthcoming Steelcase gift of the Stow & Davis property, $2,616,352. The total dollar value of all giving to the west bank project to date is $13,316,352. At least 75% of that giving was done by people in this room tonight. Of the furnishings in this building, over $1,200,000 in value was provided by the manufacturers listed in your program and recognized on the plaques on each floor. What a high quality of product you produce. I hope we provide a showcase for all of you equal to your expectations.

As we wrap up this campaign, I am reminded of the delightful minister at the Second Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, when I was a boy. Only the long pastoral prayer midway in the Sunday morning service tested the patience of a ten-year-old. At the point when he asked forgiveness for our sins of commission and omission, I knew we were only an Amen away from getting on with the business. If we have given any offense during this campaign, I can assure you it is an error of omission, not a willful transgression.

In building this new structure on the Grand River we have used Fred Bell's theme, "A Bridge to the Future." Crossing that bridge from here to there will be teachers molded in our School of Education, Business men and women educated in our Seidman School of Business, Engineers trained in the School of Engineering, Masters in Nursing from the Kirkhof School, Masters taking their degrees from our School of Social Work, researchers from our University and others along with industrial scientists working to help our economy in west Michigan and many others in many fields.
The river itself has an important connection for us. It connects our Allendale campus to our work here, and there is a real bridge that we cross moving from one to another. Everyone who knows Grand Valley has participated in or been aware of the debate about Grand Valley's primary location. As the years pass the old debate like so many will become beside the point. The wisdom of the Allendale site will become increasingly apparent. The state needs a high quality, limited enrollment liberal arts college. The original dream recurs, and becomes reality. That dream and reality is unique for a state institution. If Grand Valley had been located in the city, that concept by now would have gone to the place where dead dreams go.

The necessity of a university in the heart of the city has become apparent over the last few years. Far easier to bring about the birth of applied research and graduate and other professional education needed for careers in our thriving, vigorous population center; far easier than convincing those who make things happen to build a gem of a liberal arts college in a peaceful, bucolic setting. Yet we as a people need both, and here we are in process of having them. Within one university we have a bridge to the future because within our institution we pass across a bridge between two types of educational function. Something not everyone can do because they do not have the right locations to do it, nor do they have the will. Thank you for giving so that we can do this.

This is an evening for wrapping it up, for enjoying what you have wrought. It is a culmination. When the Grand Valley Foundation was
established, one of its goals was the construction of this building. Several of you are Foundation members. Certainly for you this is a culmination, one that could not be without the service of our Foundation Board. Yet, I would not fulfill the responsibility of my office if I did not remind you that we are not finished. We still have dreams. Our community needs a university, not a new university, and that comes in time and only with commitment. I hope there will come a time when another idea or project captures your fancy, when you see another opportunity to improve your community, and when we at Grand Valley State University can again serve as your agent for doing so.
REMARKS FOR DEDICATION OF L.V. EBERHARD CENTER

The history of a region is a history of a river. On this the Grand River, the first people, the native Americans, plied its waters with their canoes, took from the stream water for their daily needs, fished it, and built their villages on its banks. In the 19th century the river became first an avenue for pioneer discovery, later an avenue of commerce. The new settlers also built their towns along its banks, and the current of the river became an important factor in the development of manufacture in the region.

Today the river is no longer required to serve as it once was, and we can create along its banks new structures, and uses for the land, uses that add to the beauty and enjoyment of our lives. In the name of the citizens of Michigan, the Board, Faculty, Staff and Students of Grand Valley State University, and the 4,200 people, Foundations, and Corporations who contributed over $13,000,000 to the construction and program of our new building, we are here to dedicate the facility, to name it for one of our most important benefactors, L.V. Eberhard. We are here to dedicate in the name of 26,000 contributors to WGVC-TV and WGVU-FM radio, and to over two million viewers and listeners the finest public television and radio station facility in the country. We are here to name it the Meijer Broadcast Center, recognizing the long-time and continuing support of public broadcasting by Fred Meijer, his family and his company. We are here to begin University research, academic learning in several fields, new technologies for the area, assistance to business, industry, government, education and social organizations, and to vouchsafe these activities in Grand Rapids to the west bank of the Grand River just as our founders did on the west
INTRODUCTION FOR PAUL HENRY

Congressman Paul Henry flew home this morning to address us. The Congress, I understand, is in session this morning so I want to assure Paul that if an opponent attacks him for absenteeism today I will write him a written excuse for the Speaker. We at Grand Valley are pleased that you view this occasion with the importance we do, so much so that you made this special effort.

Dr. Paul Henry came to Grand Rapids to teach Political Science at Calvin College 20 years ago. One begins to recognize what uncommon political skills he possesses when you observe how well accepted he was as a non-Dutchman among the Dutch. He has the ability to reach out to people in a friendly manner, and communicate views and positions clearly and thoughtfully. More than that, he acts as well as communicates, and that in the long run bodes well for his constituents in Michigan's Fifth Congressional District.

So often we in academia are criticized for being heavy on theory and light on practice. Congressman Henry has demonstrated that an excellent Political Science Professor can be an excellent practicing politician. Both your academic and political achievements make it attractive to us that you participate in the dedication of the L.V. Eberhard Center and the Meijer Broadcast Center at Grand Valley State University.
INTRODUCTION OF VERN EHLERS - DEDICATION

This morning we are standing and sitting in Senator Vern Ehlers' territory. It also belongs to Representative Thomas Mathieu who has a hearing in Petoskey today. The citizens of Michigan are the largest donor to this project, nearly 21 million dollars. Upon Governor Blanchard's recommendation, the Legislature appropriated the money on their behalf, and we extend our thanks to the Legislature through the members who are here today - Senator Ehlers, Representative Walter DeLange from Kent County, and Representative Alvin Hoekman from Ottawa County.

Senator Ehlers is going to address us briefly for the Legislature. He has academic credentials similar to those of Congressman Henry, except he taught Physics at Calvin. It must be relatively easy to move from the field of nature's laws to making the state's laws. At least Senator Ehlers has done so with skill and ease.
I am so pleased that the University, by doing some of its work in the heart of Grand Rapids, is contributing to the positive, exciting development of the city. I believe our city among cities is a jewel in Michigan's crown. The Mayor of Grand Rapids is into his second term, and continues to show vision for the future, and the intense vigor to shape the future in his vision. I might add, Mr. Mayor, that in the audience are the people who work in this new building, all new payers of the Grand Rapids income tax. I thought you might have a special greeting for them.
RIBBON-CUTTING REMARKS - DEDICATION

We have now reached the moment for ribbon cutting. Governor Blanchard, Maxine Swanson, the Chairman of the Board of Control, and I will put our hands and minds to the task. I understand Governors take a special course in ribbon cutting so Governor Blanchard knows more about this than Maxine and I do.

There might be some problem though. This L.V. Eberhard Center is a very smart building. There is so much technological equipment in it that it helps to have an engineering degree when you walk through the halls. You don't cut a ribbon on a building like this with ordinary scissors. There are no shears made that can do the job. We have to do it with some device, perhaps a lazer, far beyond my historian's understanding. Last week I started placing odds on whether or not it would work. Our contingency plan is to hang someone from the roof and lower him to the ribbon. After this act, Chairman Swanson will close the ceremonies.
ORDER OF PROCESSION

Grand Marshal
President of Student Senate
Officers of the University
Officiating Clergy
Board of Control
City and State Representatives
Dedication Speaker
Recipient of the Honorary Degree
The President of the University

ORDER OF CEREMONIES

Processional--Sousa Medley ............................................. The Tailgaters
Invocation ................................................................. The Reverend John DeBoer
Welcome ........................................................................ Maxine Swanson
Chairman of the GVSU Board of Control
Remarks and Conferring of Honorary Degree .................. President Arend Lubbers
on Governor James Blanchard
(Recipient presented and hooded by Provost Glenn Niemeyer)
Remarks ................................................................. Governor Blanchard
Dedication Address ..................................................... Representative Paul Henry
Greetings from the Legislature ................................. Senator Vern Ehlers
Greetings from the City ............................................... Mayor Gerald Helmholdt
Ribbon Cutting ............................................................ Governor Blanchard
Chairman Swanson
President Lubbers
Balloon Launch
Recessional--Sousa Medley ............................................. The Tailgaters