Remarks on Ronald F. VanSteeland, delivered during Convocation at the Cook-DeWitt Center on March 29, 2001

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We honor a man whose talents and loyalty have contributed to the creation of the University’s ethos. He was here near the beginning, and he leaves at a time when the University is in “full bloom.” He was here as traditions developed, as ways of doing our business were established, as our higher standards of operating were set, and as our ethic conditioned all dealings and relationships. He was not only here, his role in shaping and influencing what we are and how we work is likely to be lasting in the continuing life of the University. Can there be a better legacy than his? I think not. He can enter a new phase of life knowing what he has done in the past has distinguished him. And we are here today to certify that distinction.

We all know Ron. We have all taken benefit from what he has given us. We can count on his word. We cannot dismiss the way his mind analyses. We can be thankful that our finances are well managed. We can be thankful, too, for his expectation that we do our work as diligently as he does his. We can recognize his creativity in so many “nooks and crannies” of our campus.
Early in our time together I came to understand that he would never embarrass the University or me about the University’s finances and that his mental range was greater than financial and plat administration. On one hand, we had an excellent Minister of the Exchequer and on the other we had a Minister without Portfolio who could move about the University in many areas suggesting, enhancing and implementing, helping to create the Grand Valley that exists today.

I consider it one of the fortunate circumstances of my career to have our lives come into the same orbit. As President, how well I have been served, as a friend how loyally dealt with. This is a relationship one must note for it drives professional success in a climate of personal trust and the enjoyment that comes from friendship.

Shakespeare referred to one of his characters with these words, “My man’s as true as steel.” As I reflect on Ron I cannot use better words to describe him.