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Arend D. Lubbers
Grand Valley State University

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My remarks this evening were written at the time I was reading a “Brief History of the Kings and Queens of England.” King Edward III, dates 1312 to 1377, one of England’s most significant, often invited his knights to join him at court for deliberations and parties. They were a chivalrous and sometimes rowdy lot. At such meetings he enjoined them to increase and improve the kingdom and sent them out to accomplish good deeds. His success and his realm often depended upon their success and loyalty.

I see tonight’s event through an historically tinted view. You have been invited by President Haas to return to hear about your alma mater. The success of the institution over which he presides, and his success depends to an important degree on what you are willing to contribute. Modern day knights like Eric Maino, an information engineer for Microsoft, are summoned from afar to tell of their exploits and their commitment to the cause so you may be inspired. Traditions build up for annual events like this one just as they did at Edward III’s court. For him it was annual jousting tournaments. For you it is hearing from three presidents whether you want to or not. I have one problem. Each year the mavens of photography insist that we stand together to be recorded. If I stand in the middle, I look like a connector between twin towers. If Tom Haas is appropriately in the
middle, I look like an unwanted bungalow nestled beside two skyscrapers. I have not thought of myself as short, but now I have my doubts. To help me cope and join these two, I conjure up visions of Napoleon, Churchill, and even Edward III, who was short by today’s standards.

Seeing us together can be for you a positive reminder of the continuity in leadership your alma mater has experienced over nearly 50 years. I am grateful that my successors did not screw it up and you should be, too. Can you imagine how unhappy I would be if they had? People would give me a sad knowing look and say, “I’m so sorry.” You would slink away when asked where you attended college with a parting comment, “You wouldn’t know it. It’s a small school in the Midwest.” Now, with the triumphs you can proudly say Grand Valley State University, and if perchance they don’t know it, you can proudly tell of its accomplishments. I now happily listen to compliments about our university and am even given undeserved credit for accomplishments during the administrations of Mark and Tom. The realm has been in good hands.

In Shakespeare’s play “Troilus and Cressida”, Pandarus says to his niece, “Be moderate. Be moderate.” On the whole that is a good admonition. Yet, for us who are of Grand Valley it becomes increasingly difficult to be moderate in our estimation of our university. The successes are too numerous; engendering high enthusiasm beyond moderation. We are on a winning streak.
And what is needed to keep the streak alive? Eric Maino, Class of 2005, will tell us. What he has done attracted our attention; enough so, to be among the recipients of the GVSU Young Alumni Award in 2011. Just as a loyal 14th Century knight, he returns to advise those responsible for the Padnos College of Engineering. He speaks to students. He established “The Eric Maino Community Technology Award Endowment Scholarship.” He will tell us what he hopes will result because of his philanthropy. Fellow alumni, it’s not all about money, but it is all about what accomplishments money provides.