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University Club Anniversary
May 17, 2013
By Arend D. Lubbers

On this anniversary evening that calls for informal celebrations and reminiscences, I ask that you indulge me my written manuscript. I write out everything I want to say publicly more as protection for the audience than a crutch for me. A speaker of experience and long life, as I have, tends to reminisce too much and use clichés as he wanders toward a conclusion.

Perhaps I am not the most appropriate person to reflect on the 50 year celebration which began as the Faculty Club. Ron Van Steeland, who was on the scene before me, and over the years did much to advance the club, knows more of the intimate details of the successes and trials of this organization.

The club contributed significantly to our early years at Grand Valley. A President always viewed with reserve at best and suspicions at worst as he or she begins work amongst the Faculty, seeks to find ways to become acquainted informally. The President wants to know and be known. The Faculty Club events provided that opportunity. Dick and Sandy LeFebvre, I remember, were particularly generous, inviting members to their home and to their cottage on Lake Michigan. I remember a few dances, one at the Holland County Club in particular.

Dance with the President or his spouse, and you can't say they are aloof. Those activities were important for us as we learned to relate on a personal as well as professional level with Faculty and staff; for non-teaching people were often included. Good food washed down with wine, beer, or spirits created the exchanges that most often result in friendly exchanges.

Early on, encouraged by these social occasions, I tried to promote a Faculty & Staff Dining Room. First, in the then new Student Center, now named for Russell Kirkhof, where eventually such a room has had some success. The first attempt failed because the custom of bringing sandwiches in a brown paper bag was deeply entrenched. Mackinaw Hall was the center of the brown bag conspiracy that doomed the Faculty Staff Dining Room. Faculty interaction at noon was a low priority at \$3.00 an encounter compared to \$1.00's worth of food from the family grocery budget deposited in a brown paper bag.

The most elaborate attempt at finding a University Club home happened when we built the clubhouse at the Meadows. There are still mementos that attest to that attempt in the main dining room and the attractive room that adjoins it; that room was designated the home of the Club. Though brown bags were still in evidence, I think distance from usual campus walking routes kept that room from

being used for restaurant dining. It turned out to be highly attractive for special events.

The final attempt during my watch is the DeVos Center downtown that has a beautiful room designated as the University Club. Though I doubted it would gain permanence as a daily dining room a magnificent bar was installed as a temptation.

Should the University Club ever decide to assert the power still nascent within it they could claim ownership of these rooms to which I have alluded, and charge the University a fee for their use. This would not only alleviate the necessity for a dues increase, but pay for unlimited numbers of activities, plus a salary for the officers, and an occasional place on the Board of Control agenda. I point this out to you as the officers put forth the priorities for the next 50 years.

Whatever initiatives you undertake, I welcome the flow of memoranda mostly from Esther Burns and Kim Schmidt informing and inviting me to participate in the friendly enjoyment of University Club activities. The Club serves its main purpose well – to provide opportunities for Faculty and Staff to enjoy one another's company in social settings as much or more than they do working together.