



**DR. RICHARD PERRY:
UNFINISHED SYMPHONY
May 9, 1997**

**Address to Mark the Opening of the Exhibit Commemorating
the 125th Anniversary of The University of Toledo**

I find myself somewhat ill at ease in speaking to you on an occasion as memorable as this. When Professor Barbara Floyd called to invite me to this task, I asked that question which comes so easily at those moments, "Why me?"

Those of you who know Barbara are well acquainted with the quickness of the disarming way by which she is able to have almost anyone do her bidding. As I remember, she explained the purpose related to the 125th anniversary of the University and the library, then said it was thought that since I was a UT grad and had been on staff for a long time that I might blend some of the nostalgia, the pervasive spirit and promise of the university community. I replied something to the effect that I had not been here "that long - certainly not 125 years." There was, for me, an agonizing pause on Barbara's end of the line, and then she replied, "No, Dick - it only seems that long - but will you do it?" Of course, I said yes.

Then I was faced with choosing a theme for my remarks. I carefully considered several, keeping in mind the many challenges and opportunities facing the university, and the great advancement it has experienced in its 125 years. I knew that I could take the easy approach to this assignment and rely heavily on the authoritative work of Frank Hickerson's volume, The Tower Builders, which Jesse Long finished after Frank's death.

I could also have made use of the fine writing of Barbara Floyd, titled The Tower's Lengthening Shadow, prepared especially for this 125th anniversary. I decided against that approach because there is so much history in each volume, that each is recommended to you for a full reading. My choice of highlights would not do justice to the work of the authors - so I thought of other themes.

However, before moving to the many possible themes for my remarks, I thought you might be interested to recall a few vignettes that are not in the two sources I just mentioned.

Early in my career here, I learned who was really in charge of the university, who really

ran this place. It was three women: the Registrar, Hazel Greiner Petcoff; the Secretary to the Board, Lucille Mack; and the Librarian, Mary Gillham. Professor James Southworth of the Department of English referred to them occasionally as the "Three Graces." Thus, even then, there was a women's commission in the making and although not organized formally, or recognized as such, it was a factor in the operation and major decision making of the university.

The men of the faculty had their own informal influence society in operation. This was the noon Bridge Club, which operated in a room up on the fifth floor of University Hall. Brenton Stevenson, Professor of English, and Arnold Lapp of Accounting were mainstays of that group. I can say that many "informal agreements" were worked out in those noon bridge games.

It wasn't long until the Faculty Bowling League took on this informal leadership role. Then it was the Golf League, and in more recent years, it is the "locker room." The informal, wholesome, friendly camaraderie of these gatherings provided a rich, truly collegial culture that influenced and supported a collegiality and atmosphere of mutual concern and respect for the entire university family.

Commencements over the years have provided a number of memorable moments. A few in the audience may recognize those I recall for you. Glen Driscoll's tenure had the most interesting experiences with commencement. The first commencement he presided over was a nail biter. Governor Gilligan was the scheduled speaker. He was not there as the procession began, nor did he arrive until after the President had opened the ceremony. Glen told me afterward that all during the processional he was mentally preparing the commencement address he knew he would have to make if the governor did not come.

The commencement of 1975 was on a blistering hot June day and the field house was an oven. The heat provided an urgent encouragement to get out of the ceremony as quickly as possible. That is exactly what the graduates and the audience did. The graduates received their diplomas, walked off the stage and right out the back door of the field house. Parents, friends and relatives followed. The only persons left for the recessional were those in the platform party. President Driscoll said that would never happen again, because "next year we will be in Centennial Hall". But in 1976 the graduates, led by those with graduate and law degrees walked out, ignoring the pleas of marshals to return to their seats. Those two incidents caused a major change in commencements. The university changed to a format of separate college commencements.

You may be interested in some of the themes I considered, and the reasons I decided against them. I thought of using that truism philosophy of Pogo, "We have met the enemy and they are us," but I thought better, for no one wants to be described as their own worst enemy.

Then I thought of the title of an old movie, "Lifeboat." That seemed to fit rather well, since external forces have torpedoed so much of the forward progress of the university, and we now look around as politely as possible to see who is going over the side to save the others.

The endless challenge of the turbulent sea, as in the movie "Typhoon," surfaced as a metaphor for those who choose to accept the presidency of a university or that of a faculty senate, as they try to steer a safe course through perilous unpredictable waves and maelstrom.

"Captains Courageous," starring Spencer Tracy and Freddie Bartholomew, was another possibility, but then I recalled that Mario, played by Tracy, drowned doing good deeds for his shipmates, sacrificing himself for those he served. Then of course, there was "Mutiny on the Bounty." I thought that might be appropriate, considering the disagreements that seem to tug and pull the university in different directions during the 60s and 70s, along with other confrontations that have taken place on this campus through the years.

Then I thought of developments over the recent past which seem to have divided our university family, so I considered that slogan which was presented alongside a railroad as a presidential candidate roared through northwestern Ohio with his campaign - remember it - the sign read, "Bring us together." I decided against that one, considering what happened to the person who adopted it for his campaign.

I considered that a bit of nostalgia might be appropriate, so I thought of the song "The Way We Were" - but then I thought, 'Great heavens - Do we really want to recall "The Way We Were?'"

I have in my records and memory a memo to the faculty from Dr. Andrew J. Townsend, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, concerning workload for faculty. As I recall, the course load was four to five courses, adding up to 15 credit hours, plus the expectation of lengthy office hours.

Department Chairpersons received a one course reduction per year - no stipend - and that was under a semester system.

Those abominable administrators had it no easier, for when new administrative responsibilities arose, they were simply assigned to existing staff. Salary increases were \$50.00 to \$100.00 a year, and summer session faculty salaries were at times adjusted downward if class enrollments did not meet budget goals.

When I considered what we were and how far we have come, I quickly discarded a theme of "The Way We Were."

Another movie title jumped before my eyes: "Back to the Future." Why not? After all, the characters in the movie accidentally traveled backward in time, finding out that they now needed to rectify some of their mistakes in order to insure that the future would develop properly.

Looking into history for a few guiding principles might offer a few worthwhile thoughts of how to preserve the future.

The university is moving through its transition to the semester system. That certainly is a "Back to the Future" event. You know the popular phrase, "been there - done that?"

Just beyond these walls to my right are the archival materials for the great switch made during 1967-68 when the university moved from a semester system to a quarter system. One can go to the correspondence, documents and Collegian articles of that period and find almost all of the arguments for the university to stay on the semester system as we now find to stay on the quarter system. Students were reported to prefer the semester system and three day a week classes just as now they are described as preferring the quarter system. The great arguments of whether 3-hour courses should become 4- or 5-hour courses went on as they have now as to whether 4- and 5-hour courses should become three credit hour courses. So why not have a theme based on "Back to the Future?"

We are familiar with Santayana's admonition that, "Those who fail to remember history are condemned to repeat its mistakes." Put simply, if we cannot learn from experience, our future is at considerable risk.

Those words of a noted philosopher were echoed in the line, "When will they ever Learn," from the song of the Viet Nam Era, "Where Have all the Flowers Gone?" Well, what is there to learn from these 125 years of growth and the realization of dreams of so many who built, taught, studied, researched, and worked for this university?

The answer is in the vision, dedication and competence of each person who is, and has been, a part of the community of the university. More than that, it is the respect, the care, the concern, the helpfulness that the members of the university give to each other. It is rejecting authority based on a position of power, whether based on the hierarchy of the faculty, administration, students or alumni, and embracing the power of rational exploration of issues, always in terms of the consequences of the actions that are proposed.

It is also the willingness to be slow to anger and to criticize when one does not have the responsibility to be held accountable for what one criticizes as another's decision.

Asa Knowles, President here during the 1950s for eight years, was right when he said during very difficult budget building that, "The academic programs were the priority support items in the budget planning." He was pilloried in the press with a cartoon on the sports pages of a local newspaper, showing him kicking a football out of the stadium.

William Carlson, 1959-1972, was right when he said that "Building research and graduate programs would lead to the enrichment of undergraduate education, and that both could be done only if the university had a first-class library."

Glen Driscoll, President here from 1972-1985, was exactly right when he said that he would always be considered wrong by somebody, because every time he made a decision for something, it would be a decision against some other person or program.

James Mccomas, here briefly in the mid 1980s, was right when he said, "The university

had a lot of potential."

Frank Horton, our current president, was right when he was asked his thoughts on a critical issue which had been decided and said, "It will divide the faculty." Division weakens potential.

Each of the Presidents was right. Each was able to see the consequences of a set of actions. Each was concerned, as was the faculty, about the future, the ultimate effect on students, and the future of the university.

"There is bound to be a certain amount of trouble running any "enterprise". If you are the president, the trouble is blamed on you."

Adapted from Arcy's New Deal in Bartlett's familiar Quotations 14th edition, Donald Robert Perry Marquis (1878-1937)

Perhaps principles of dedication and service which lead to unity of purpose are found in the most important resource which has made this university a success. The answer, of course, is in people -the thousands of students, the hundreds on hundreds of faculty, the scores of trustees, the secretaries, maintenance, grounds keepers, custodians and all the rest, each doing their part who, over the years, created what is the miracle on Bancroft Street. Sounds very much like another movie title, "Miracle on 34th Street." It has been a miracle.

Who would have thought that just prior to the economic collapse of the late 1920s, that an election would be held to authorize the building of a university on Bancroft Street.

Remember - vision, faith and hard work provided the campus. Those same qualities and a number of others built the university as we know it today. Who would have thought that another election in 1959 would pass, by 144 votes, to provide \$2,000,000 a year to the university from local taxes and save the university from a devastating shortage of funds?

That line of thought led directly to another movie title, "Field of Dreams." A story line full of hope, vision, great dreams, and faith. Remember the great signature line of the movie...Remember the dream to build a major league baseball field in a cornfield in the middle of Iowa...Remember the hesitation - and remember the line..." If you build it, they will come."

That must have been the thought in the minds of those who built this university. Come they did - by the thousands.

The university has enrolled more than 729,283 students in credit course work and has awarded more than 110,000 degrees to 85,000 graduates. Those figures do not include the thousands who have enrolled in continuing education courses which, since the late 1950s, have delivered instruction to 400,000 students throughout the United States. While I was trying to absorb the immensity of those figures, I began to remember the following: I have served with:

Six presidents, Two interim presidents, and an interim operating committee, Six deans of Arts and Sciences, Eleven deans of Bus. Ad., Five deans of Education, Five deans of Engineering, Three in Pharmacy, Four in the Community and Technical College, Six or more deans of students, and vice presidents without number...(actually I have counted 15 vice presidents with various assignments).

All of the above adds up to 61 major administrators.

Records are not readily available to count all of the faculty appointments made throughout the years. I am certain they are in the hundreds.

Although the "Back to the Future" idea was useful, for it allowed one to search the past for timeless truth on which to secure a future, it didn't really provide the closing theme, that lasting image which would focus our attention on the critical issue and send every one home happy, saying "That's it! Let's do it."

One last metaphor provides the closing for my remarks -Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony." Those who know the music know how wonderful it is - and we, wondering at its beauty, know that the symphony is much like the university. It took the great vision of a masterful composer to fashion the score of that symphony- and a great symphonic orchestra playing together, in unified and harmonious effort, to create the expected glory of the music.

The symphony started in 1822 was not finished by Schubert at the time of his death in 1828. Speculation and opinion of those knowledgeable of his life have it that after writing the Allegro, Andante and Scherzo, Schubert realized he could not, or at least felt he could not equal what he had already produced, and so stalemated, indecision and a weariness of will settled on his efforts. It was as if he gave up on this masterpiece. Somehow it was said that he believed he had poured so much of his brilliant talent into what he had already done that he could not equal or exceed that which had been completed.

The university is like a great symphony. Consider all the various sections of the orchestra and the chorus which may be required, consider the several levels of talent, the first and second chairs, the soloists, the necessity to work, to perform in harmony, to avoid dissonance, to blend the voices of the chorus, and then the chorus with the orchestra.

The attention that must be given to tempo and dynamics. The need for each player, each voice, to recognize the value and strength of each musician and how important it is to respect the other person's talent, and how thankful one can be when another's talent or strength has "covered" your own momentary error.

When all the talent of orchestra and chorus work together in harmony the result as we all know is a glorious sound. Audiences applaud and return and return. Encores seem endless.

The university is like a great but unfinished symphony. So much effort and talent has been put forth to date to make so many justifiably proud of it; yet the "music" it has to offer the world, which can surpass all that it has performed in the past lies here on this campus right now. Look around you - look at the person seated on either side of you, in front of you, in back of you. These are your section mates in this great orchestra and chorus. Treasure their talent, respect their responsibility, honor their effort, listen to their voices, lean on their strengths, help them in their weaknesses - seek and achieve harmony.

Certainly, each of us wants our moment of forte, fortissimo and even grandioso, and certainly the fermata, the singer's moment of glory; but the performance, our companions and the audience can stand only so much of that. The goal is harmony, and the entire company of players must know that and practice to achieve it.

The building of a great university is in many ways like composing a great work of music.

The university is an "Unfinished Symphony." It is likely that it may never be finished, but we must all work at it. The achievement of harmony will occur as the university "players" turn their attention to building future crescendos.

The superior performances of the future which lie ahead of this university require the harmony of blended voices to achieve what is possible for its future. Great voices, blended, will produce a great musical performance. This university can move forward to greater achievements in the next 125 years, by recognizing the past for what it was - an era that set high standards and by remembering that the achievements of the past require that they be surpassed in the present, and certainly in the future.

Respect, concern, civility, dedication to excellence - you have heard all of these before. You know them well.

But harmony- now that may be new. But pause - be silent. Listen. Listen for the harmony. It will be there. Work on it - achieve it. It is what will make it possible to surpass the achievements of the past. Harmony, not discord, will aid the next movement of the "unfinished symphony."

John Masefield, Poet Laureate of England (1930-1967) had said, "There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university. It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see, where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge, will honor thought in all its finer ways."