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## Diether H. Haenicke Memorial Service

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Diether H. Haenicke Memorial Service  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
2/26/09

- Good afternoon. It is my honor to welcome you to Miller Auditorium this afternoon for an occasion in which we honor and celebrate the life of our friend and colleague Diether H. Haenicke.
- When I learned that I was to follow the beautiful voices of the brothers of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, I wondered about the wisdom of having my voice heard after what can only be called, "a tough act to follow." Then I realized, the substance of my remarks might well be summed up with that phrase, "a tough act to follow." As president, I succeeded a man who generated the outpouring of love and respect we see evidenced here today--a man whose second presidency at Western Michigan University was referred to by many as "the second coming."
- It has been my privilege to follow in the footsteps of that second coming. Along with this entire campus community, I have reaped the benefits of Diether's 14 years as president and nearly 25 years in this community. He is, indeed, a tough act to follow. But as a new president, I could not have asked for a better beginning--the challenge of meeting the high standards established by such a predecessor and the opportunity to build upon the magnificent foundation he established.
- The Haenicke legacy is illustrated by the stature and international reputation of this great university, certainly, but his legacy is also the gift he left this community--the sense of what it means to be part of an academic community, to be devoted to the life of the mind and to know without question the transformational powers of higher education. We have the tangible evidence of his work--

outstanding facilities, loyal friends and alumni, a "research university" designation, a Phi Beta Kappa chapter--but we have something even more valuable. We have confidence in our ability to rise to even greater heights and to meet whatever challenge the future holds.

- Two years ago, the first meal Linda and I enjoyed in Kalamazoo was with Diether and Carol Haenicke. It was a meal and an evening of conversation I will never forget. During the hours we spent together, Linda and I experienced the charm, intellect, wit and heart of two lovely people who had already served as this University's first couple. That evening, I learned about Diether's passion for this community and his reverence for what university life could and should be. (Later of course, I learned from reading his Kalamazoo Gazette column that when he first met Linda, "it was love at first sight." And he said some nice things about me as well.)

- My immediate impression of Diether that evening was that he was a man of great heart--a somewhat ironic assessment, given what I later learned about the physical limitations of that heart. Physically, that heart was his Achilles heel. But in the human and spiritual sense, his heart knew now bounds. He was a man in love--with his wife and family, with a community, with the university he nurtured and with a way of life--the life of the mind, learning and the transformational powers of education. He was a teacher at heart. He loved what he did and what he could do.

- Our colleague Dr. Peter Blicke (BLICK-lah) put it perfectly in a recent letter to the Haenicke family.

He said, " The amazing thing about Diether is that, at heart, he never was in this for himself. He was in it for others—for his students, for his University, for the arts, for his faculty, for the ideals of academia, and especially for his family."

- We do not mourn so much for Diether but rather for our own loss of a treasure of incalculable worth. We do not mourn for Diether because we know his life was a happy one. Albert Schweitzer, the humanitarian, philosopher, and physician, once reflected that the only truly happy and productive people in the world are those who learn to give. He should have met Diether Haenicke.

- Diether gave. He gave in a way that few could match. He gave during his first presidency here and he dug deeper to give again when his University needed him. He gave in a way that defied the fragile nature of the physical organ that was his heart. He gave in a way that demonstrated the real "heart" that was at the core of his existence. He gave in a way that leaves me convinced his life was a full, complete and happy one. Again, let me turn to the words of Dr. Blickle.

"He had strong wings. And he used them to help those around him rise a little higher than they would have without him."

- As one of those who has been lifted a little higher, I have a deep sense of gratitude to Diether Haenicke and to his family for sharing him with us all of these years. It was my privilege to know Diether Haenicke during the final two years of his remarkable life. Like all of you, I wish only that I had the opportunity to know him longer and to spend more time with the man who "was wise and warm-hearted and could dazzle anyone with his verbal dexterity."

- For everyone who knew or worked with Diether Haenicke, there is a unique perspective and set of memories. For another perspective, it is now my pleasure to introduce to you the chair of the Western Michigan University Board of Trustees Mr. Ken Miller.