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25 Year Club

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25 Year Club
John M. Dunn remarks
Dec. 7, 2009

- Good Evening. This is the third year I have been privileged to attend this dinner. I have come to look forward to it. On a professional level, it affords me an opportunity to thank the people--you--who have made this the University what it is today.
- On a more personal level, you are my contemporaries. It is a delight to spend time in your company. And I am comfortable knowing that if I mention a name like Pierre Trudeau, John DeLorean or Torvill and Dean, I won't get a blank look in return.
- I have one core message to deliver to you this evening. Thank you.
- Thank you for the more than 750 years, collectively, that you have devoted to this University and the success of our students. Thank you for building your career here and for building this great University.
- You have built this university--through your teaching, through the support you have provided in keeping our physical plant sparkling, by keeping our academic enterprise humming, in building our technical assets and by providing top-notch and compassionate service to our students before, during and after their enrollment here. You have built this University's physical structure and more important, its reputation.
- Your commitment has been unwavering in a world that has changed dramatically and yet curiously stayed the same in many ways since you began your career here.

- You began your career at WMU in the year 1984--a year that definitely did not live up to the dystopian future envisioned by George Orwell in his book of the same name. It was however a year dominated by events rather than people. Those events signaled trends we are still experiencing today.

- It was a year of recession and bank failures--conditions that called for a government fix. Enough said on that topic.

- It was the year that the AIDS virus was identified.

- In 1984, the Bell Telephone Co. was broken up.

- That same year, Nokia's first portable phone was introduced, and the year that ushered in the Apple Macintosh computer.

- And it was the year the MTV Music Awards were introduced.

Just imagine how different life today would be like without those developments.

- Here on campus in 1984, Susan Ponchillia began her WMU tenure and we were in the middle of a presidential search that eventually identified Diether H. Haenicke as a prime candidate to move this university forward into the future. Tonight we honor them both and mourn their loss. Again, it is difficult to imagine what this University and the College of Health and Human Services would look like today without their contributions.

- Tonight is about those of you who have built WMU. It is about your life's work and the "product" that Western Michigan University is known for--successful students and alumni.

- I've used this thought before, so forgive me if you've heard this, but I find it particularly applicable to a celebration like this one. The ancient Romans had a tradition: whenever one of their engineers constructed an arch, as the capstone was hoisted into place, the engineer assumed accountability for his work in the most profound way possible: he stood under the arch.
- I think each of us has the same accountability moment when our students hit that capstone moment. They graduate and leave us to assume their roles in the society in which we all must live. In a very real way, we are putting our lives and futures on the line and showing our confidence in the product of our life's work and passion. The contributions of our students are the proof of our success.

That success is what we are celebrating this evening. You made a commitment to the mission of WMU. I hope that your experience in doing so is and remains one of your central accomplishments in life.

Please enjoy the rest of your evening. You deserve to revel in this moment of accomplishment. Your work has made our University and our world a better place to be.

Thank you.