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Herman Donavan

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UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

H. L. DONOVAN
PRESIDENT EMERITUS

November 10, 1958

President Kelly Thompson
Western Kentucky State College
Bowling Green, Kentucky

My dear Kelly:

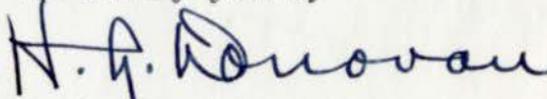
Mrs. Donovan was going through a scrapbook which she started in 1908 before we were married, and she found a copy of my speech presenting a cane from the faculty and student body of Western to Captain Vanmeter, as he was called. He had given a large sum of money to restore the Southern Normal School after it had been destroyed by fire. This gift, as Mr. Cherry told us, made it possible for the college to survive. From this money they built a chapel and called it Vanmeter Hall. The faculty and students selected me to present the cane to Mr. Vanmeter. He was a very elderly gentleman of great dignity, and when I presented the cane to him, he was overcome by his emotions. I can never forget how he held my hand for what seemed to me to be a long period of time. The old gentleman was extremely grateful to Mr. Cherry, the faculty and students for the recognition given to him.

Later when the first building was erected on the hill, the name Vanmeter Hall was given to it, and it stands as a worthy monument to a generous citizen who kept the original institution from disappearing.

I thought you might like to have in your files a copy of this brief address which a twenty-year-old student gave on that occasion.

I trust everything is going well at Western. I am sorry you did not get up to the University for the Educational Conference this year. We missed you. Best regards.

Cordially yours,



H. L. Donovan
President Emeritus

HLD:dh

Delivered at chapel on the occasion of
presenting Mr. VanMeter with a cane. 1908

By H. L. Donovan

Whether a man gives his life to the discovery of truth and finding islands and continents in the ocean of thought, or to brightening the visions of earth's short night; whether he labor to adjust the inequalities of life, solve, the problems of living, or to open the way to success for others in the world, he deserves a niche in Fame's eternal temple.

We have profited by the toil, sacrifice and generosity of Captain VanMeter, and if we rightly appreciate his gift we shall seek to emulate his deed and cultivate his spirit of philanthropy, thereby honoring ourselves in remembering and honoring him.

Selfishness is the curse of human life, the destroyer of human happiness and the race. Giving is God's way of curing selfishness and securing for man the highest good. The true worth of money then, is never known until men begin to honor God and themselves by doing good with it. Money unused is worthless; used only for the selfish gratifications of its possessor, it becomes like caged birds that droop and pine and sing a saddened song at best; while money generously used for the uplifting and betterment of the race, becomes like birds uncaged that follow their unfettered fancy, dart through the sunbeams, or loiter in the shade singing songs, every note of which seems to be the outgushing of a heart overflowing with joy. That it is more blessed to give than to receive, is the teaching of human experience, as well as of the Scripture; and he who shares in such ministry to the race is among the noblest and happiest of the sons of God.

It is our pleasure this morning to honor such a one. Captain VanMeter on the behalf of the faculty and student body of this institution, I have been commissioned to present to you this cane as a token of our appreciation of your generosity in days gone by and as you have been the staff upon which we leaned in time of weakness, I trust that this cane may be a support upon which you may lean. Again we thank you for your past kindness and your generosity and wish you a long and happy life.