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UA3/3/1 Founder's Day Address: "A Brief Tribute"

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Today we pay tribute to the founders of Western Kentucky University. Unlike those of you who are presently members of Western's student body, I did not attend Western as an undergraduate. However, my wife is a graduate of this university. When I attended her commencement ceremonies on May 31, 1957, I was impressed by President Thompson's charge to the graduating class. He emphasized the goals and dreams of our school's founders, and the responsibilities that its students, faculty and administration have in constantly working toward these goals.

We can best honor Western's past by meeting the challenges of the present. Present achievements are made on foundations of the past, but they also reflect adaptations to current needs. Traditions can live meaningfully only so long as they can be made adaptable to present-day conditions. Let us look briefly at some of Western's traditions as they were, as they are, and as they affect Western's role as a university.

Western has had a tradition of competent faculty. A number of inspirational and knowledgeable teachers have been the backbone of this institution. One indication of the continuation of this tradition of competent faculty is the fact that 41% of Western's current faculty members have the earned doctor's degree, while many others have considerable work toward their doctorates.

At one time Western's faculty was small enough for all of them to sit on the stage of Van Metre Auditorium during the chapel programs. Today our faculty is so large that it has to meet in the ballroom of the Garrett
Student Center. The Academic Council, made up of elected and appointed members of the faculty and administration, was formed two years ago so that the faculty's participation in policy decisions which would help strengthen the university would not be diminished by its increasing size. The faculty also has a representative on the University's Board of Regents.

Traditionally, Western has had loyal students. The close relationships long felt between these students, the faculty and administrators and the friendly spirit of all these groups brought about the expression the "Western family" which all of you have heard. This rapport, which through the years has produced a devoted alumni, has not been lost as Western's student enrollment has grown tremendously in recent times.

Western's student body is now fortunate to be represented by Associated Students. You also have representatives on the Academic Council and the university's Board of Regents. A number of service organizations and social fraternities and sororities are in existence on our campus and have made significant contributions to our university.

Dr. Henry Hardin Cherry, Western's first president, said, "It is our duty to sanctify this great hill by hard study." As Western has developed more undergraduate and graduate academic programs, more fellowships, scholarships and assistantships have been given to worthy students. A recent national study revealed that more Western graduates have gone on to obtain their doctor's degrees than have the graduates of any other university of our type in this region of the country. One of these graduates is Vice-President Raymond L. Cravens, who is presiding at this program today.

Western's Honors Program, which a number of you are participating in, has produced students who have received national awards, such as N.D.E.A. and Woodrow Wilson Fellowships, to attend graduate schools. The faculty
Honors Program Committee and the Western Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, among other groups, have strongly supported this extremely important program. Honorary fraternities are now an integral part of our campus life. We cannot be satisfied by our past and present accomplishments, however, as more and more emphasis is needed on our various undergraduate and graduate academic programs to not only maintain but to increase our academic standards of excellence.

Another encouraging sign that Western is doing this, that it is building on its foundations to meet the challenges of the present and future, is the continuing acquisition of necessary aids to learning, such as new buildings, laboratory equipment, and the consideration of expanded computer facilities. The heart of any university is its library holdings and facilities. Western is fortunate to have the Margie Helm Library, the Science Library and the Kentucky Library, which is the finest research library in the state for Kentucky topics, as well as other specialized holdings on campus. Now being planned is a new Graduate Center, which would further strengthen Western's library program.

It was fitting that on June 16, 1966, Western attained university status, after having progressed through sixty years of normal school, teachers college, and college levels. As a community of scholars, we now need to ask ourselves whether we are responding to present opportunities to further the academic stature of our university in a way that would honor the founders of our institution. This question can only be answered by understanding the significance of the role of the present-day university in our country. On this subject I believe some recent remarks of Dr. Moody E. Prior, a nationally prominent former graduate school dean, as well as a professor of Humanities and English, are worthy of my quoting
at length. He has said, "The affairs of men are never completely tidy, planned, orderly, and predictable. They involve personal and local self-interest, inherited prejudice, lust for power, and uncontrolled passion. But all societies are aware that action conducted on such impulses alone is incompatible with responsible effort and destructive of civilized life. It is for this reason that one of the most desirable powers of man is his desire for knowledge of his physical environment and for self knowledge, arrived at by exact observation, selection of relevant facts accurately established, disciplined intellectual effort, and persistence in following a line of controlled thinking to whatever conclusion it might lead, irrespective of prejudices, whims, predilections, and even self-interest."

"The one public institution," he continues, "which is dedicated to the cultivation and application of these powers is the university. It is one of the remarkable social inventions of man. On the basis of this conception of its role the university can demand the right of academic freedom and freedom from the influence of powerful outside interests, and to ask for the privilege of being in large measure master in its own house in ordering the government of its special community in its own way. On the same grounds it can undertake the responsibility of educating the young, not merely in skills needed by society but in the habits of disciplined objective thinking, and in the taste for serious contemplation which is the mark of a civilized man."

This is indeed a high ideal which Dr. Prior envisions for a university and one never easily attained. Yet, it is in that direction that I believe Western is now moving. It is in that direction that we must continue to move if we are to respond to the needs of our society as well as our founders did to those of their day.
Dr. Gordon Wilson, Sr., esteemed former Western Professor, recently wrote President Thompson a letter in which he said, "I am watching with great enjoyment the growth and development of Western--my Western, your Western, Kentucky's Western. And I rejoice daily that I have had the pleasure of feeling that every new building, even every new brick and bit of concrete, somehow is sacred to the place that so long has been and is mine." This is an occasion on which we acknowledge Western's debt to the past, but since, for a growing enterprise, every year is also a beginning it is appropriate today that all of us--students, faculty, and administration--resolve to work even harder toward the constant improvement of our university.

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