5-9-1969

UA3/3 Salute to Gilbert Burkhead

Kelly Thompson
Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc ua_records
Part of the Education Commons, and the Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc ua_records/3617

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in WKU Archives Records by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.
SALUTE TO GILBERT BURKHEAD

This occasion, honoring a distinguished Kentucky educator, requires that my remarks be condensed for the sake of brevity.

I have known Gilbert Burkhead since we were students together at Western in the late '20s. Our association throughout the many years since is a treasure for my personal storehouse of memories. I am honored and proud to add tribute to him on this occasion.
Dr. Charles Austin Beard was an American historian who lived during the period 1874-1948. A student asked him one time, "Can you sum up everything you have learned in five minutes?" The historian said he could do better than that; he could do it in just four lines:

1. Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power.

2. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small.
3. The bee fertilizes the flower it robs.

4. When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.

A writer for the Saturday Review said of Mr. Beard's succinct but profound summation:

"Each of these sentences, of course, opens out on a universe of human thought and experience. Each seems enigmatic or paradoxical; all represent a challenge
to the individual mind--not just to see fully into and beyond the separate statements but to relate them to personal experience."

I have related them to the personal experience which I have had with our honoree, and I believe that they relate to the personal experience which all of us have had with this man who has lived by the creed embodied in the following thoughts of Horace Mann:
"Republics, one after another.... have perished from a want of intelligence and virtue in the masses of the people.... If we do not prepare children to become good citizens; if we do not develop their capacities; if we do not enrich their minds with knowledge, imbue their hearts with love of truth and duty, and a reverence for all things sacred and holy; then our republic must go down to destruction, as others have gone before it; and mankind must sweep through another vast cycle of sin and suffering
before the dawn of a better era can arise from the world."

1. Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power.

Gilbert Burkhead, you have controlled your authority with dignity. You have chosen to try to lead instead of to drive. So, therefore, your power has never meant ego, and the gods have smiled.
2. *The mills of God grind slowly,*

*but they grind exceedingly small.*

Gilbert Burkhead, you have been patient with the speed of human mills, being more concerned with the fine texture of the product. Therefore, you have taken a stand on the side of quality, and education in this county and education in this Commonwealth have been made better.
3. The bee fertilizes the flower it robs.

Gilbert Burkhead, you have lived by the rule that we must put back as we take away, if we are to guarantee continuation. You have not asked your people to give without insuring that they would receive; and the people of your area have been made more prosperous, both physically and spiritually—then, now, and in the future.
4. **When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.**

Gilbert Burkhead, you have had more than your share of dreary and lonesome days professionally and of heartbreak personally, but you have never forgotten that the stars are magnified as the daylight ebbs. Therefore, you have been an inspiring friend, a helpful neighbor, and an optimistic, as well as capable, leader in your profession; and life has been made easier for those with whom you have been associated.
The historian's philosophical summation of a lifetime of learning is powerful enough in its four parts. I add a fifth, which indeed is most appropriate for this occasion.

The specification which I would add to his blueprint is--

No one can measure the influence which he may have had upon another.
Many of you are familiar with Webster's words:

"If we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work upon men's mortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, with the just fear of God and love of their fellow man, we engrave on those tablets something which no time can efface and which will brighten and brighten to all eternity."
I am completely convinced that the influence of a life well lived is the greatest teaching instrument of all time.

How better to work upon mortal minds; how better to imbue high principles than by example. Gilbert Burkhead, this you have done; and you have engraved something which time will not efface.

Invested with power, you have shown humility; having had the chance to speed
the mills, you have instead exercised patience in order to beget quality; having had the opportunity to build for a spectacular present, you have put back for the future; and having been sorely tempted at times to close your eyes, you have kept them on the stars.

You will never know how much influence for good you have had upon others; but others will know, and many will pass it on.
These are the reasons why your work upon mortal minds will brighten and brighten to all eternity.

In conclusion, the final words of this salute must be--and I speak for all who are here and for thousands who cannot be here--we congratulate you, we thank you, God bless you.