

**President's Remarks
Fellows Dinner
September 17, 2005**

Good evening and welcome to the Heidelberg College Fellows Dinner.

I may not have arrived here tonight in a DeLorean with Marty McFly. But we have dialed up Doc Brown's famous time machine from the movie, "Back To the Future." So tonight I'd like you to consider where you were and what were you doing some 50 years ago today.

What were the sights and sounds of September in the 1950s? Some of you remember the '50s very well, because you were right here at Heidelberg College. You were listening to Doris Day, the Four Ace, and the McGuire Sisters. Or maybe you "Rocked Around the Clock" with the new rock and roll of Fats Domino, Chuck Berry and that newcomer – that horrified parents and many thought would be a flash-in-the-pan singer – Elvis Presley.

The movie "Rebel Without a Cause" and James Dean brought a brooding style to popularity in the '50s. I can just see George Freeman, Dave Drake or Ralph Quellhorst on campus with their collars turned up, in a T-shirt and jeans and a pack of cigarettes rolled in their sleeve.

Fifty-five and '57 Chevy's were the hottest cars. I had my very own Davy Crockett hat, as a toddler in Massillon, Ohio and was watching the Mickey Mouse Club and Captain Kangaroo. My family watched Perry Como, Gunsmoke and the Lawrence Welk Show. In those days, no one loved Raymond. Instead, they all loved Lucy. Ed Sullivan – not David Letterman – was on the stage of the Ed Sullivan Theatre. Grace Kelly was not yet a queen.

And to prove how much things have changed, the Cleveland Browns were in the NFL title game in 1955 and Heidelberg was the OAC champion in 1952, 1954, 1956 and 1959. Those were indeed "the good old days."

With the first televised news conferences, President Eisenhower moved in front of the camera. The minimum wage moved up to \$1. And Rosa Parks moved to the front of the bus.

The President had a heart attack in September of '55. And, I suppose, so did a number of Dodger fans when they finally beat the Yankees in the World Series.

Looking back in time 50 years for some of us is nostalgia, it is memories.

For the younger ones among us it is history – learned in a classroom or from watching movies like "Back to the Future," "Grease" or "Rebel Without a Cause."

Our choice to go back to the future and the 1950s is no accident. As I have gotten to know members of our extended Heidelberg family, I have felt something remarkable among graduates in the 1950s. They seem to have special bonds with one another and deep ties to this place.

This week, Lisette and I had dinner with a few of our former and present faculty and staff icons for the expressed purpose of hearing their stories about Heidelberg in years gone by. We did this so we can use the best of Heidelberg's past to prepare it for the future.

At the heart of all of their stories was the theme of family and community. They talked with emotion about faculty sitting on their porches on the campus waiting to engage students in conversation; Dean Oleson waking students up at 4:00 in the morning to celebrate Happy St. Lucia Day with lit candles in his hair; and I can't tell you how many beast and fowl apparently were part of convocations, chapel services and commencement activities.

Those are the kind of Heidelberg stories I want to hear in the decades ahead as our future graduates reminisce. The way so many former students speak about their Heidelberg experience is the way I want all of our current students to feel when they leave.

To that end, we have worked vigorously in admissions to attract great students to our campuses. You would be proud to know today's Heidelberg students and you would be smart to hire them when they graduate!

This entering class is more diverse in terms of geographic distribution and life experiences. They enrich our community with their views and vigor. As I met them in convocation and since at a number of campus events, I am struck by their curiosity and their belief that just about anything is possible. They see no limits on ideas, no boundaries on collaboration.

When you think back on your Heidelberg days, be they 10 years ago or more than 50, you remember certain courses, a few professors and dear friends. But, I suspect that what you remember most is not names or dates or facts, but the way these people and experiences made you feel.

We want each member of the Heidelberg Family to feel a part of this college's strong present and brighter future. We ask you to help us preserve and celebrate the great traditions of the past, even as we make new memories every day.

Donna Overholt, speaking at my investiture as the head of our Alumni Council, said of Heidelberg alumni and friends, "We will share yesterday's stories to keep Heidelberg true to its history. We will share our time to help Heidelberg shine to attract today's best students. We will share our substance as we build a future for the next century's students."

That promise means a great deal to me. As Fellows, you understand how much stronger the fabric of Heidelberg becomes with the support of each individual. You demonstrated that support in an incredible way this past year. Our Heidelberg Fund exceeded previous totals both in terms of amount of funds received and total number of donors. Thanks to each and every one of you for making this possible!

As the president of Heidelberg, I am navigating an extraordinary “Time Machine” every day: looking back, looking around, looking ahead. And trust me on this, change in higher education doesn’t travel as fast as a plutonium-powered DeLorean. But we are making progress – and with your help, significant progress.

As I look back on the legacy of our founders, I find great wisdom and relevance

for defining our future. Heidelberg College opened its doors in 1850 with a well-balanced curriculum, offering courses of study in the classic liberal arts as well as professional disciplines such as education, farming and the ministry. It also had as a purpose to develop students of high moral character.

In my inaugural address I said that I envision Heidelberg College serving as the model for what is called a “New American College.” New American Colleges are a small and select group of colleges that are just the right size (somewhere between 2,000 and 4,000 students) that are committed to grounding students in the liberal arts, giving them the context that will inform ethical leadership and inspiring service to humankind while preparing them for a professional career.

If this sounds familiar – it should – because in many ways it is a recasting of our mission in 1850, but with relevance to the 21 st century. New American Colleges are distinguished by their attention to the residential and student life dimensions of the college experience. There is an emphasis on faculty and student interaction with formal in class experiences blending into what takes place informally on and around campus. There is an emphasis on critical thinking, civic engagement, service learning and effective writing, speaking and quantitative skills.

These are many of the dimensions we already expect from Heidelberg College.

But as a model for a New American College we also need to broaden the curriculum in the professional disciplines, add selective graduate programs and make research a more important part of the student learning experience.

From our roots as a “preacher and teacher college” to preparing leaders for all sectors of our global society, Heidelberg is well positioned. Our committed and capable Board of Trustees safeguards the values of this institution even as they help to prepare us for the future. I am enormously grateful for their support.

In addition to the Trustees, I thank you, each of you as members of the Fellows Organization, for the margin of excellence you provide to Heidelberg. Lisette and I thank you also for your friendship. It is one of the great joys of being at Heidelberg.

I do not pretend to understand time travel. Nor am I entirely sure if it is possible – or impossible. I understand Doc Brown’s plutonium-fueled Flux Capacitor about as much as I do Stephen Hawking’s lessons on theoretical physics.

But it is fun to think: What if we could go anywhere in time – ahead or back? Where would we go in our time machine? I expect a great many people in this room would choose days when you were here on the Heidelberg College campus. Your legacy of giving has helped students from our past, is helping students of the present and no doubt will help those yet to come.

We are grateful for your support and hope that all of you – both alumni and friends – will forever consider Heidelberg College your “ Sweet Alma Home.”

Thank you