

Heritage Society Dinner

June 24, 2004

It is a great pleasure to welcome all of you to a very special club - The Heidelberg Heritage Society. This is an evening Lisette and I have looked forward to since we joined the Heidelberg family because it is a special time to honor you and to celebrate your faithful, long-term commitment to Heidelberg College.

It was just a few weeks ago that our nation celebrated the 60th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy, spearheaded by a distinguished group of soldiers known as: "The Greatest Generation." That name coined by Tom Brokaw stuck because it rings true. And one of the reasons it rings true is because of the marked contrast between the great deeds and humble heroism of those who did them.

Many of you here hail from the greatest generation. And all of you are making your mark as Heidelberg's greatest alumni and friends because you are quietly going about the business of making certain that Heidelberg College will be here to serve future generations of students. You are assuring a Heidelberg that is of the highest academic quality, inspiring to its students, engaged with its community and financially strong.

It was a great joy and privilege to hear you speak about the best gifts that Heidelberg College has given you. Not surprisingly, two themes we often hear from alumni relate to finding their life's mate and finding life lessons from beloved (and some not so beloved) faculty members.

Alumni often talk about people like Frank Kramer, in Classics, who stretched their minds to conceive of ancient cultures that they were just coming to understand!

Or Professor Henry Gibson and Drs. Ferris and Dorothy Ohl - who gave you the gift of expressing music in the most beautiful way possible.

Or Dr. David Noss, who revealed the similarities between the world's great religions, yet managed at the same time to stretch and test and strengthen your adolescent Christian faith.

These are the giants on whose shoulders stand today's faculty. The commitments of past and current faculty make it possible for Heidelberg College to be consistently ranked as one of the best universities in the Midwest.

And, by the way, that is not just my opinion but also that of U.S. News and World Report, which has had us highly ranked for the past 16 years.

And why is it possible for Heidelberg to receive such lofty rankings, to attract good students, and to provide a great education?

One very important reason is because faithful friends and alumni like you have committed your personal resources to see that it is so. You are not only GIVING part of your treasury, you are CREATING treasures of the heart for future students by allowing them to have the Heidelberg experience.

You have treated Heidelberg like family – you’ve left us in your will, provided for us in your trusts, given us your homes, established scholarships, and created charitable gift annuities, to name just a few of the ways of giving long-term gifts.

Your contributions will keep Heidelberg College financially strong. Just the people in this room have either made or committed to gifts that will total well in excess of a million dollars. New bequests and commitments are coming in day by day.

In January, we received a \$1,000,000 gift from an alumni couple – members of this Heritage Society, Ernest and Oletha Pfleiderer. Their gift will be used for a mundane, yet most necessary cause - operation and maintenance of the new Gillmor Science Hall that you saw on your way in this evening. Their funds won’t build the building – but they’ll take care of this it so that it remains at the cutting edge for our students.

However, I don’t want you to think that we value only the million dollar gifts. We are grateful for every contribution – because every one – of any size – means Heidelberg has meant something special to someone special to us.

The 6th Heidelberg President, Charles Miller – known as “the building president” for the five buildings built during his three-decade plus tenure at the beginning of the 20th century – may have put it best:

“To give oneself to the service of a worthy cause may seem very unimportant, but it is in fact the most any man can ever do.”

Thank you for doing the most you can do – by remembering Heidelberg through your long-term plans – and thank you for making your mark, quietly but firmly.

As we recently celebrated the heroic deeds of the Greatest Generation, tonight we are honored to express our appreciation to you for the greatness of the gifts that you are providing to future generations of Heidelberg students.

Thank you.