

Farewell to the Illinois Classical Conference

Taped by Ray Den Adel, to be presented at the ICC annual meeting c. 1982

In spite of hassles with hostile administrators and a frustrating inability to communicate with pragmatic parents, it is my firm conviction that the teaching of Latin and Greek is the most rewarding experience a person can have. It has given me personal contact with some of the most stimulating minds and personalities of our times: Dr. Alexander Lenard, the Hungarian exile in Brazil, who wrote *Winnie Ille Pu*; Dr. Josef Eberle, the German poet and newspaper editor, who spends his leisure time writing and publishing volumes of modern Latin poetry; and our own Dr. D. Herbert Abel, who was known and loved by many of you. This career has also put into my hands innumerable "choice" young people, who grew from struggling students into my lifelong friends. And it has provided me with numerous delightful relationships with other teachers of Latin and Greek, whom I consider beyond question the most select group of teachers in the world.

Of all the professional organizations to which I have belonged, I love most of all the ICC. I have looked forward to the annual conventions as a child looks forward to Christmas. I cannot name how many of you have taken special places in my affections with your kindness and responsiveness to me through the years. And I am so grateful to Ray Den Adel for giving me this chance to tell you what you mean to me.

Ray suggested that I read something in English or Latin. I would like to be selfish and do both. One of my favorite Latin poems is Martial's analysis of the good life. I would like to read you my paraphrase of this:

If I could have whatever things would make
Life most worth living, here is what I'd take:
A little wealth willed to me by a friend,
Since money earned is ever hard to spend;
A fertile piece of land to always give
Enough return of food that I could live
With ample in reserve from year to year --
Then times of drought would bring with them no fear;
A simple way of life, no business cares,
And socially no formal dress affairs;
A healthy body with the strength to do
The chores a gentleman's accustomed to;
A few congenial friends with whom to share
My evening meals of plain, old-fashioned fare;
Enough red wine to make our evenings gay,
But not enough to drive good taste away;
With normal zest for feminine company,
I'd neither prudish nor immoral be;
A quiet sleep would make the night hours fly,
And tranquillizer pills I'd never buy;
With no complexes to disturb my thought,
I'd be content with what my life had brought;

My limitations I'd accept with grace,
And death I'd neither seek nor dread to face.

With a few minor changes (for instance, nobody ever willed me "anything"), this has been pretty close to the pattern of my life. And now as I draw near the end of my career, my college is recognizing my 30-some-odd years of service with the ultimate reward -- the establishment of a chair of classics on our campus. And I feel that I can say of myself something similar to what was said by Artaban at the end of my "*Fabula de Quarto Mago*":

Iter finitum est. Dona accepta sunt. Summum bonum inveni.

With my love to you all. This is Bernice L. Fox, Monmouth College.

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Remarks at Alumni Banquet, Commencement

This week is not real to me. I have never had so many accolades in such a short period of time. I am walking around on Cloud 9, but I have not forgot that clouds have no floor and, come next Monday, I shall fall through to the ground -- hard! But in the meantime, I am reveling in my glory.

Perhaps the things that have touched me most deeply this week are these:

1. A current student wrote in his class evaluation: "I have worked hard in this course. I don't really care whether I make an A, B, or C. But I think you are a great teacher, and I have done the best I could to please you."
2. Another great moment for me came by way of one of your own members. A graduate from the class of '57 sent me a bunch of beautiful red roses, whose arrival was timed to coincide with the start of the last class of my teaching career. And enclosed with the roses was a four-page letter, recalling the things that this alum remembered about me and about his classes under me. It was a heart-warming letter.

I love Monmouth College very much; and to me Monmouth College is one thing -- the students I have known over the years. As I close my office door for the last time and walk off the campus, my greatest loss will be the students, and the alums that those students become. I can wish you nothing better than this: When the time comes for you to step aside, may your fellow-workers do what mine have done for me -- make the saddest moment of your life also the most glorious.

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Farewell to Monmouth College

Remarks made at my last faculty meeting, May 1981

Shortly before William Saroyan died the other day, he made the comment that he always knew that death came to everybody, but he thought that maybe an exception would be made in his case. That is the way, I think, that I felt about retirement.

But before talking about my retirement, I would like to defend myself on two points: I disclaim any relationship to that 150-year-old witch whose picture was published along with an article about me in the *Oracle*. Also, if I said that my years at Monmouth College had been "awful good years," it is high time that I be retired. I would give an F to any student using that kind of English. However, I was quoted accurately when I said that my present situation is "bittersweet." I admit that I am tired after many years of teaching twelve courses a year instead of the usual eight in order to maintain a respectable major. I admit also that, when the snow starts drifting next winter, it will be a relief not to have to struggle through it to get to

But to me living and teaching have been as closely related as living and breathing. It will be difficult for me to readjust my whole concept of what my life is all about. I do, however, have one joy. I am handing over the department to a person who is young and vital and competent, a person for whom I feel affection and respect. And as I say goodbye to her and to you, that word takes on its original meaning: May God be with you.