

Comments by Taylor Beard

Last Lecture

Old Cabell Hall Auditorium

March 29, 2005

I am honored to present a last lecture this evening. The University of Virginia has had a profound impact on my life, and for that I am very grateful. I have enjoyed my professional work here in:

Teaching,

Advising and mentoring students,

Conducting research and writing,

Performing administrative duties,

Working on committees, and

Providing service to my profession.

I joined the UVa faculty forty years ago, just after completing my graduate studies in Oklahoma. I had some very good friends here, whom I had known from church and student activities at Auburn University. Their being in Charlottesville helped me decide to consider a faculty position here.

A couple of months after my interview, in the Spring of 1965, the famous prank of putting a cow on the top of the Rotunda occurred. I had nothing to do with it.

Pranks aside, the University of Virginia was a well respected (dare I say provincial) coat-and-tie institution of higher education for the sons of Virginia aristocracy. UVa did have about 700 women students, most of whom were enrolled in the Nursing School or the graduate programs of the School of Education. UVa had some foreign (international) students and a few Negro students. Our student body included approximately 7,500 students, and at that time the University had planned to grow to 10,000 students over the following 5 years.

You can imagine some of the changes that have occurred in my field of engineering. Hand calculations aided by a slide rule and a main frame computer were our major analytical tools. Hand-held calculators and personal computers were yet to be developed.

First a few stories about the Honor System:

My wife and I first arrived in Charlottesville in late August, 1965. We had a new car and an apartment at the brand new 1800 Jefferson Park Apartments. What I did not have was appropriate teaching clothes or the money to pay for them.

Our friends told me that proper clothing could be obtained from the Young Men's Shop, downtown. When I entered the store, the manager greeted me, and I told him that I was a new member of the University faculty. I also told him that I would be getting my first pay check in October, but since that money was already obligated, I would not be able to pay for anything I bought until early November. It was not a problem.

I was shown a range of Harris Tweed sports coats. I selected a couple of them with pants, shirts and bow ties, and even a pair of Florsheim Imperial shoes. When I got ready to leave, I confirmed that the manager had spelled my name correctly. No identification card or letter of reference was needed. The honor system (community of trust) was widely respected.

A few months later I was shocked when a 4th-year engineering student came into my office and reported to me that he was withdrawing from the University for an honor violation. He had taken the train with other students to Atlanta for the Georgia Tech-UVa football game (which of course UVa lost). On the train-ride back to Charlottesville, he and his friends had passed the time by drinking beer and playing cards. He got caught cheating at poker, and the only honorable thing for him to do was to withdraw from the University.

A couple of years later, while grading tests for my thermodynamics course, I noticed an obvious instance of copied work. I called in a couple of students and showed them various test papers, and they also concluded that cheating had occurred. They made the proper confrontation. Later at an honor trial, the offender was found guilty and disenrolled. I

remember the letter his mother sent me, angrily stating that her son would certainly lose his student deferment from the draft, and that I would be responsible if her son was killed in the war in Vietnam. I understood her frustration. I had a "critical occupational deferment" from the draft, at least critical for me.

Since those days, a number of my students have made infractions of the honor code. Some have gone to trial and have been found guilty. Others have exercised their "conscientious retraction" and have been allowed to learn from their experience and to continue as students until graduation. Unfortunately, others have gotten away with their infractions because their fellow students have not wanted to get involved or have concluded that the observed cheating was judged to not be important enough to warrant a forced dismissal.

During my early years at UVa a number of other important social changes were occurring.

1. Effective racial integration in public education began with the integration of the teaching staff of the Charlottesville Public Schools in 1965. My wife, Kathie began as a 1st grade teacher that year. In 1966, although there had been some previous school integration in Charlottesville, all the Charlottesville Public Schools had their student bodies desegregated.

Other civil rights issues, like voter registration, fair employment, fair housing, and other forms of racial discrimination have required change over the years.

Through the influence of family, church, friends and critics, I came to understand the importance of being involved in social change. As a result, I became a member of the:

Charlottesville Democratic Committee,

Charlottesville Fair Housing Committee,

Board of the Charlottesville Branch of the NAACP, and

Board of the Charlottesville Housing Foundation.

2. In 1969, a few years after Phil Gates first came to UVa, Hurricane Camille dropped 10 inches of rain in Charlottesville and up to 27 inches of rain in Nelson County. The flooding killed 150 people. Out of concern for those with damaged homes, Father Bill Stickle (of St. Thomas Aquinas Church) organized Project Scrub. Student volunteers spent weekends helping residents along the James River clean up and repair their damaged homes.

3. By May 1970, televised images and news reports of the horrors of the Vietnam War, the invasion of Cambodia, and the killing of four war protesters at Kent State University stimulated a large cross-section of UVa students to protest the war. There were marches to the President's family residence at Carrs Hill and to Maury Hall (home of the Naval ROTC). I attended a mid-day protest rally on the steps of the Rotunda and was present during one of the nights of angry protests (called the riot of 1970).

Some protesters blocked traffic on University Avenue and got cars to honk for peace. A large group of state police were called-in, and 68 people were arrested (mainly students and a pizza delivery man). They were hauled downtown to the jail in a Mayflower moving van (Remember the Mayflower became a rallying cry.)

I remember getting a call from the office of the Engineering Dean, a couple of days later, asking me to be a faculty presence on the lawn when UVa President Edgar Shannon was to speak. My wife and young daughter joined me on the lawn.

President Shannon announced his concern about the war, stating that he respected the student protesters' acts of conscience. He circulated petitions urging our congressional leaders to redirect the war policy. He also directed faculty to excuse absences and late assignments, so students could "concentrate on constructive action related to the nation's war policy." In a week when many universities just shut down, the University did not close. Shannon's bold statement drew criticism from government leaders and many alumni, but generally praise from students and faculty.

The next fall, President Shannon organized a leadership retreat that involved student leaders, administrators and selected faculty members. The first such retreat was

successful in creating better understandings. It was later referred to as the Mountain

Lake experience. In subsequent years, such retreats were held at Graves Mountain Lodge, and I participated in a couple of them.

4. By the early 1970s after court battles and many behind the scenes committee meetings, the University agreed to accept and process women's applications for admission on an equal basis with men. This effectively doubled the size of the undergraduate student body in a very few years.

Fortunately this was a time of economic health in Virginia, so the Legislature was able to provide funds for new buildings to accommodate that growth. New buildings were built for the Education, Law, Graduate Business, and Nursing Schools and for English, Mechanical Engineering, and Clemmons Library. I was fortunate to have served in the University Provost's Office as the Academic Space Administrator during this time.

5. In 1972, Central Virginia experienced Hurricane Agnes, our second "100-year flood" in three years. By 1974, through the leadership of Madison House, Project Scrub, had repaired more than 100 homes. This student volunteer movement led to the formation of the Charlottesville Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) and the Albemarle Housing Improvement Program (AHIP). Managers, a few full-time carpenters, and many student volunteers provided the labor. Local government made federal funds available to rehabilitate houses that were owned by low-income people. This had the overall effect of restoring community vitality. Because of my work on the Board of the Charlottesville Housing Foundation, I was asked to serve as a Vice-President of CHIP and as the founding Vice-President of AHIP. Today, AHIP is still active in providing low-income housing and rehabilitation.

6. Since 1983, I have spent much of my volunteer time as the chair of the Charlottesville/Albemarle CROP WALK Committee. We have raised almost \$675,000 for local and international hunger and disaster relief activities.

I have also been involved in political affairs. My political activities have been primarily behind the scenes, searching for able candidates who are committed to providing good government. I have worked with others to try to get them elected. We have had some successes and some disappointments, but I think it is time to stop rambling about the good ole days.

So what are my words of advice for the University of Virginia community and its students.

1. First, I am concerned when a university appears to have as its chief goal to become recognized as a first-class national research institution. This is well and good, but one of our historic goals has been to provide a first-class education for our students. UVa has often been ranked as one of the top two public universities in our nation. This indicates that we have generally been able to maintain a balance. Research and education should be linked together.

Resource allocation, however, is very important. It is unfortunate when priorities appear to reward high quality research productivity and to discount high quality educational activities. We have a problem when faculty members make choices to emphasize their own research and to assign a low priority to their students' educational experiences.

2. Secondly, I urge you to affirm an ethic that balances the usual "I/me-based" short-term values and self-interest with larger "we" or community-based values. Our society needs leadership individuals with priorities that focus on obtaining the optimum quality of life for all people.
3. Finally, I would urge that, while you use your mind to grow and to complete your academic education, you should "Get a life." Please consider how you can make a difference and be of service within your community. As others have said, "A life of service is a fulfilled life."

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for allowing me to make these comments.