

**Senior Last Lecture  
Miami University  
1997  
Dr. Phillip Shriver, President Emeritus**

Tom Adams, I appreciate so very much that most gracious introduction and to you ladies and gentleman my appreciation for what you have just done to me. I am most honored and I will treasure this memory forever.

When we planned this particular event, we did not anticipate that the crowd would be facing due west. Perhaps, as we continue in the years to come we'll reorient the axis so most are not facing right into the sun. I assure you this particular speaker is not going to talk so long that the sun will finally disappear behind King Library – that's a promise. It seems particularly fortunate that we're gathered where we are, in spite of looking into the sun, because we're in one of the most historic places on the Miami campus. I was reminded of that as the Beta bells struck just a few moments ago. I'm reminded of that as I look to our oldest campus building, Elliot Hall, our next oldest, Stoddard Hall, the two oldest residence halls in the state of Ohio and among the oldest in the nation. Our first President, Robert Hamilton Bishop, said that he'd hoped that Miami would become the Yale of the West, and the first buildings built after Old Manse were the residence halls, consciously built in imitation of Connecticut Hall the oldest building at Yale. Elliot, Stoddard – we are between these two venerable structures as we gather for this last lecture of the class of 1997.

And I look just beyond to the place we call the Hub and indeed you see from the Hub the paths radiating in every direction – East, West, North, South. In the center of the Hub, the Miami Seal – the seal derives from 1826 when the faculty of that year began using it on every official document of the university including the diplomas that you'll get here in twelve days. On that seal the open book, the globe, the telescope, the past, the present, the future. The telescope reminding us of the knowledge yet to be known, the need for us to continue to probe the heavens to try to ascertain what it is that we're doing here on this planet earth. Why we're here? What is the purpose? What is the plan? Did it happen by accident? Was there intent? And I think most of us believe that there was conscious intent as we struggle to understand why. I look at the Hub and I appreciate that where these sidewalks intersect you have stones from all 50 states of the union brought back to campus from the alumni who have gone out across the nation and the world. Every state of the union is represented in the stones at the Hub.

I look at the Hub and I see near it a statue sculpted by a Miami student in honor of a Miami sorority. And at the base of that statue an inscription, I don't know how many of you have paused to read it, before you leave I hope you do. The inscription says "To think that in such a place I lived such a life," the words of Winston Churchill recalling his own student days. I look beyond the Hub at the building called Upham Hall and I think of Dr. Alfred H. Upham another graduate of the class of '97, 1897. Valedictorian of that class of 15. Alfred H. Upham, one who came back to this campus to teach only to serve

as secretary, as vice president, as president. Remember Alfred Upham, as the one who in 1907 wrote the lyrics to the alma mater song, the song that will close these proceedings this night. Remember Alfred Upham as the one who in nineteen hundred and nine wrote the first book length history of Miami entitled *Old Miami, Yale of the Early West*. And remember Alfred Upham as the one who wrote an article in that centennial year nineteen hundred and nine observing the one hundredth anniversary of the chartering of Miami an article in which he summarized the accomplishments of the 1,826 graduates of Miami in the first one hundred years. We think of that figure for just a moment and you appreciate that at your commencement in twelve days there will be 2,911 receiving degrees. That in the commencements that will follow in August and in December to fill out the year of 1997 there will be additional hundreds that will bring the grand total of those receiving baccalaureate degrees to more than 3,600 or twice the number that received degrees in the first hundred years of the existence of this school. It was Dr. Upham in that article in nineteen hundred and nine that noted of the 1,826 of the first century one had become the president of the United States, 10 had become governors of the states of the union. He noted in particular that at the time of the worst crisis in this nation's history, the civil war, the governor of Ohio, the governor of Indiana, the governor of Illinois, the governor of Michigan, the governor of Mississippi, all were Miami graduates. He noted as well that, in the period of civil war and reconstruction, in addition to those five there was a second governor of Ohio, a governor of Iowa, a governor of Missouri, a governor of California all graduates of Miami University. It is the same Dr. Upham who noted in that centennial article of nineteen hundred and nine 37 graduates of Miami had become university presidents, 23 had become congressman, more than 50 had become judges. The list went on and on suggesting that those who had graduated from this university had gone on to distinguish themselves. The motto about the seal to this day is "*Prodesse Quam Conspici*" to accomplish without being conspicuous. Accomplishment indeed from the 1,826 of the first century. I see Upham Hall and am reminded of Dr. Upham.

If I were to turn to cast my gaze now about 200 yards were there not buildings in the way, I would be able to fasten to my eyes another building on this campus, the home of William Holmes McGuffey, who served as professor at Miami from 1826-1836. During which years he wrote the first addition of the most celebrated textbooks in the history of America, the *McGuffey Readers*, textbooks that have been used for five generations with Americans until the 1920's. These textbooks are still in print in 1997 with one hundred and thirty million copies in print. Exceeded in number published only by one volume, one other book, *The Holy Bible*. The McGuffey readers literally educated the nation. Professor McGuffey included in every lesson to his readers a moral, a principle affirming that it was as important to learn how to read, and to write, and to spell as it was to learn how to behave, and vice versa. That you could not, should not, separate learning from behavior. He affirmed that every lesson should contain a simple story that would instruct the reader in right and wrong.

Some years ago, about four years as my memory serves me, a former secretary of education wrote that he believed, given what was happening in the nation here in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the time had come for a reaffirmation of the need to incorporate values in our educational programs in both secondary and collegiate levels. When he made this

comment, he was picked up by the president of one of our famed eastern universities. He said when he was advised of what the former secretary of education had written that that was an embarrassment to us all. Said he, the job we have as educators is to teach students how to think, not how to behave. Reflect on that for a moment. Our job is to teach students how to think, not how to behave. Reflect on that and then recall in that recent years the nation has earned the dubious distinction of being the nation with the most violent crime rate in the world. The highest rate of violent crimes in the world are here and now in the United States. Reflect on that statement, “Our job as educators is to teach our students how to think not how to behave,” and think for a moment of what’s been happening in so many ways to diminish the fabric of this country. I reflect for a moment on some statistics I have noted in the last few months. In the last thirty years our crime rate has gone up 500% while our population has increased by 41%. Now think for a moment of the fact that in the last thirty-six years the divorce rate of the nation has gone up 200%. I think of a headline I read in the *Cleveland Plaindealer* last summer that in the past year 80% of the births in Cuyahoga County were to unwed single mothers. I think of these statistics and I reflect on the need for moral undergirding in our universities, in our schools. Moral leadership it might be called.

Your committee, in planning for the last lecture this evening, asked that the focus be on leadership with values. Some years ago John Gardner, member of a former U.S. President’s cabinet, wrote a book he entitled *The Anti-Leadership Vaccine* published in the 1960’s. It lamented the fact that on the nations’ college campuses leadership had become a dirty word. That on the nation’s college campuses there in the decade of the 1960’s those who aspired to leadership roles were regarded with suspicion that some how they were on an ego trip, some how they were self serving. John Gardner noted how this contrasted to the experience of earlier generations. When the need for leaders had been stressed again and again. How this contrasted with earlier generations, when it had been affirmed that the highest role that a student could hope to ultimately play would be the role of leader. Whether in education or industry, in government, in business, whatever it might be, John Gardner had these words to say, in his book *The Anti-Leadership Vaccine*, “leaders worthy of the name whether they are university presidents, or senators, corporation executives, or newspaper editors, school superintendents or governors, contribute to the continuing definition and articulation of the most cherished values of our society. They offer, in short, moral leadership. So much of our energy has been devoted to tending the machinery of our complex society that we have neglected this in our leadership. I’m using the word moral to refer to the shared values that must undergird any functioning society. The thing that makes a number of individuals a society rather than a population or a crowd is the presence of shared attitudes, habits, values, a shared conception of the enterprise of which they’re all apart. Shared views of why it is worthwhile for the enterprise to continue and flourish. Leaders can help in bringing that about. In fact it is required that they do so. When leaders lose their credibility or their moral authority then the society begins to disintegrate. Leaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind that is the society. They can serve as symbols for the moral unity of the society. They can express the values that hold the society together, most importantly, they conceive and articulate goals that lift people out

of their petty pre-occupations that carry them above the concourse that tears the society apart and unites them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.

We've seen happily, since the 1970's, a return of the affirmation on our campuses of the importance of leadership. The anti-leadership vaccine of the 60's seems suddenly no longer to be among us, "Thank heavens." We see, instead, now a new emphasis on leadership with values. Leadership that will show the way to a people that seems at times to be on the brink of moral and social collapse. Even the last decade and particularly in the last couple of years, we've seen an increasing incidence of publications stressing the need for leaders who have a strong value system.

I recall the best seller by William J. Bennett, *The Book of Virtues*, in which former Secretary Bennett stressed 10 values that he thought are virtues that he thought most significant: self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, faith. I salute Dr. Dennis Roberts for what he's been doing in the last couple of years in encouraging, on this campus, the development of leadership with values among our students. Expecting active participation of the learning communities, awareness and development of potential, critical thinking and reflection, appreciation and respect for human dignity and diversity, dialogue through civil discourse, and responsibility and accountability for one's actions. In the last two days, we've been mindful in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, of a summit on volunteerism involving The President of the United States, the First Lady, and the former Presidents and First Ladies, and with General Colin Powell serving as the chair. In Sunday's great magazine *Cincinnati Enquirer*, General Powell was quoted as citing what in his mind were the values a leader should have. And he stressed number one a leader should be willing himself to volunteer, to help those less fortunate and we don't have far to look to see who those are, particularly the children. General Powell said it's important for leaders to know the difference between right and wrong and to show others the distinction. He said it's important for leaders to have a belief in God, to understand the importance of hard work and education, to have self-respect, to believe in America. In yesterday afternoon's mail, I received a copy of the Beta Theta Pi magazine; six prominent Betas have written articles that filled about half of that magazine on the subject of Beta values. They stress six, each one taking one. The first stresses courage, written by a former POW held in North Vietnam during the recent Vietnamese war. The second stresses compassion, written by a veteran ABC television commentator. The third stressed loyalty, written by Congressman Richard Gephardt of Missouri, the democratic leader of the Congress. The fourth stressed responsibility, written by an astronaut, one of three Beta astronauts, incidentally. The fifth stressed integrity, written by the CEO of the Boeing company and said he in his comments, "Every Boeing employee must understand the importance of integrity in everything that he or she does because literally the lives of all those who are transported in Boeing aircraft depend on every individual being conscientious, making sure that everything was exactly as it should be, you dare not make a mistake, you dare not slip up, there is too much at stake. The sixth was written by an undergraduate from Middle Tennessee State University, a victim of cerebral palsy, bound in a wheelchair, who wrote the article on tolerance and the need for each of us to

understand where the other one is, where the other one is coming from, and respect the differences that we have.

I reflected on all of these lists and books and then reflected on my own sense of values for leaders and let me share with you the ones that I believe are particularly important, although underscoring that all that you've heard from General Powell, from the Betas, from Secretary Bennett are also valid. I would cite first of all the value of responsibility and accountability. Freedom was born a twin, the twin's name is responsibility. We all treasure freedom but we are free because we accept responsibility for our actions as they relate to others. I'm aware of one example right here in Oxford – even on High Street where the traffic we experience requires that we observe the value of responsibility and accountability on a daily basis. We appreciate that we each have the freedom to travel on High Street and to travel the highways of the nation, but, we have the responsibility of traveling it safely. We have the responsibility of traveling on the right hand side of the road. We have the responsibility of stopping where it says stop. Stopping where there is a red light. We have the responsibility of observing the speed laws. We can't just go out on the road and go every which way left lane, right lane, back and forth. A few minutes ago we heard beautiful music of members of the Miami Men's Glee Club. Each of those young men had the freedom to sing the song "Any Which Way" in any key, but because they each accepted the responsibility of singing as a group they made beautiful music, all singing the same key, singing the same words. Freedom was born a twin and the twin's name was responsibility. When I think of responsibility, I think immediately of Harry S. Truman. There's no action that says you're going to have leaders when they are needed. I was on a destroyer off Okinawa trying to make our way to Guam when the ship's radio picked up the word that Franklin D. Roosevelt was dead. We couldn't believe it, he was our president. We asked ourselves who's the new President. It came in the reply, Harry Truman. We said who's Harry Truman? We knew nothing about him. It was as though the star of the opera had just dropped dead and a spirit carried it from above and moved forward to assume the leading role. I didn't have much respect for Harry Truman that April day in 1945, but believe me I came to have a lot of respect for Harry Truman. For four years he was an officer. He was the one that coined the phrase that still sticks in my mind when I think of responsibility, "The buck stops here." The "buck stops here" you don't push the thing on to somebody else; you're the one in charge; you have to make the decision, "The buck stops here." He also said, "if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen."

Responsibility – I think of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the landings in Normandy, June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944, D-day. In Dwight Eisenhower's wallet was a copy of a message he had written on June the 5<sup>th</sup> the day before D-day that he had given to the press in the event D-day proved to be a disaster. He had already written his statement to say that it was his responsibility that the troops had gone onshore when they had and if things had not turned out as he had wished he was the one to take the blame. It seems to me that leaders must have the values, responsibility, and accountability. So often today we're inclined to blame the other person if things don't go right. If you fall, it's because the sidewalk was uneven, the banana peel was there. If you get burned, well it was McDonalds that made the coffee too hot. And on and on and on.

A second value I think the leader should have is that of the work ethic making the most of everyday. My dad used to tell me there's so many days of life on this plant earth, don't waste them, make the most of them. There is value in having a passion for the job you're in, the career, and the path you're following. Counselors in our guidance centers, tell us there are thirty- three thousand different career paths. The worst thing I hear week in and week out is, "Thank God its Friday." How terrible to begin each week believing that the only thing you have to look forward to is the end of the week. 33,000 career paths don't get you into one that has you saying, "Thank God it's Friday." Get out of it, get into one that'll have you saying, "Thank God it's Monday." Yes, Tom, this is my 50<sup>th</sup> year, and I can confess to you, admit to you that I've loved those fifty years. I have loved being a teacher. I could not conceive of being something else. Third, the value of civility, the importance of common courtesy. I can remember when I was a college student it was stressed on us again and again, we're going to make you a gentleman. We must have a return of civility in our relations with each other. We need to learn how to get along. So much more can be accomplished when we get along than when we're uptight with one another. A fourth value that I treasure, and not one that you'll find on most lists, is the value of punctuality. Webster's dictionary said that it can also be spelled punctualness. Take your choice, whichever it is says to you that the time of the other person is also valuable. If you've made an appointment for four o'clock, be there at four o'clock. If you're there quarter after you've robbed that person of fifteen minutes. You can't say well, we'll make it up. No, those fifteen minutes are gone. They have to come from something else. Be punctual, and the leaders should set the example. Be on time. The fifth value is diversity, the respect for all humans. Appreciate that each one of us can learn from every other one. I have never met the person that I could not learn from. We learn because of our differences, we learn because we have things we can contribute to another. What a dull old world this would be if we were all identically alike. Thank heavens we're not. Think of all the disciplines we have represented in this senior class tonight. English majors, Chemistry majors, History majors, Biology majors, and diversity of race, of gender. We are a diverse human family. It's important that we treasure that diversity. The sixth value is that of dependability. Long years ago I was asked to be the masters aid of Statebrook College in Yale University, along with five others. Professor Edey Smith gathered the six of us early on in our new staff assignments, sat us in a circle and he said, "Now what quality am I going to treasure the most in each one of you?" We went around the room courage, honesty etc, etc. He listened to us for about fifteen minutes and he said, "alright I'll tell you what I think is the most important ingredient that each of you can demonstrate, and that's dependability." Can I count on you? Can I count on you? Will you deliver? Will you get the assignment done? Because if I can't count on you, I don't want you on my staff. If you can't count on the leader as the example setter then he or she too will suffer an enormous inefficiency in my estimation. A seventh and final, the value of living by the golden rule. So often people are asked what would you do in a given situation, and I think to myself what would I want the other person to be doing to me. Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's very simple. It's very basic. And I've never known it not to work. Live by the golden rule and most of life's problems will be resolved.

Well, I suddenly noticed none of you were squinting. I said this would end before the sun went down behind King Library. Well it's time to bring it to a close. In twelve days your days as Miami students will be at an end. Graduation exercises will have been held. Your bags will be packed, your cars will be loaded, and you'll be starting out from the campus, from Oxford, to head home and then to wherever life's path may take you. I have a request to make of you. As you leave, take one last look at the green grass, at the red bricks, at the towers and the flowers, and keep that memory of Miami forever. Miami has been your college home. It'll be part of you all the rest of your lives and you'll be a part of it forever. And as you depart this evening, think of a little inscription on a statue sculpted by a Miami undergraduate, which reads, "To think that in such a place I led such a life." It's been great, and now I salute each and every one of you. We're proud of you, you're Miami's best, and make this class of 1997 and the years to come, truly Miami's best. *Prodesse Quam Conspici*, "to achieve without being conspicuous." To achieve, to accomplish, that is the essence. What I hope each of you will be able to do as leaders with values. Thank you so very much.