



Inauguration of Minor Myers, jr.

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9-13-1989

Inaugural Address

Minor Myers, jr.
Illinois Wesleyan University

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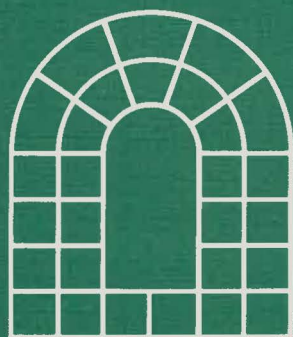
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INAUGURAL
ADDRESS

Minor Myers, jr.

September 13, 1989



ILLINOIS
WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY





*Detail from
Buck Memorial
Library*



Minor Myers, jr.

Minor Myers, jr., the seventeenth president of Illinois Wesleyan University, is a scholar and teacher, author and administrator, political philosopher and historian. Born in Akron, Ohio, he was educated at Carleton College, where he received his baccalaureate in 1964. After a year of post-graduate study at Duke University, he went on to Princeton University, which awarded him the master of arts (1967) and doctor of philosophy (1972) degrees in politics and political philosophy.

He came to Illinois Wesleyan following a five-year tenure at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York, where he was provost and dean of the faculty as well as professor of political science. As chief academic officer of the two coordinate colleges, Myers was responsible for long range planning, the instructional budget, curriculum and related academic activities.

He began his academic career in 1968 at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut, as instructor in government, progressing quickly through the ranks to full professor and departmental chairman. In 1981-82 he spent a sabbatical year in academic administration at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, as a

fellow of the American Council on Education, working with the president and dean of the college on curricular development, fiscal management, development, admission trends and other issues in the administration of higher education.

Returning to Connecticut College, he became administrative assistant to its president and dean of the faculty before leaving in 1984 to accept the position at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

He has served as chairman of the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London; as adviser to Yale University's numismatic collection and as a member of the advisory board of the Princeton University Chapel.

His published books include *Liberty Without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* and a history of Calvary Episcopal Church, Stonington, Connecticut. He co-authored a history of the Princeton Graduate School, a *Documentary History of American Interiors from the Colonial Era to 1915* and *New London Country Furniture*. Myers is currently at work on three manuscripts: *Nature's Aristocrats: College Graduates and the New Republic*; *A Dictionary of American Academics before 1830*, and *An Evening with Peter Pelham: An American Harpsichord Manuscript of 1744*.

His articles range from a scholarly look at the history of baseball in upper New York State to notes on crime and punishment in colonial Connecticut; from an investigation of an obscure Polish medal refused by George Washington to a discussion of the migration of the blockfront style of furniture in New England.

He is married to Ellen Achin, an alumna of Connecticut College, and they are parents of two sons, Minor III and Joffre.

*“E*xcept the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” I remember that phrase well from a baptism service I heard often as a child. And for whatever reason it kept recurring to me as I thought about today, and the more I thought about it, the more appropriate it seemed.

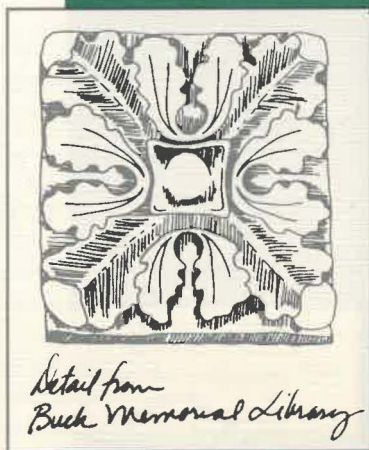
It is the opening line of the 127th Psalm. “Except the Lord build the House they labor in vain that build it.” The meaning is not obvious apart from the other verses, which are not necessarily clearer. A house, or rather a family, will not prosper unless God looks upon it with divine favor. The bad news is that effort alone is not enough: “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late.”

Only providential support seems to prosper a family, but a secondary interpretation is, and here’s the hope, that a house devoted to a larger cause like the love and fear of God, has a much better chance of that providence.

There is something in this image which explains much of the past and the future of Illinois Wesleyan. Shortly after the University was chartered in 1850, the trustees adopted a constitution. Its second paragraph is a mission statement: “The object of this institution shall be to provide a system of education adapted to the wants of the country and based upon the system of religion and morality revealed in the Scriptures.”

The message was clear. Education at Illinois Wesleyan was to be oriented toward those larger questions, the “wants of the country.”

That institution which opened in the basement of the local Methodist church now stands, almost 150 years later, in its strongest condition ever. This year it received its largest number of applicants, and admitted its most selective class ever with average SAT’s of



1163 and ACT's of 25.8. With those numbers and with an endowment of \$64.3 million for a campus population of 1734 students, Illinois Wesleyan has some claim to be included among the nation's most selective 75 smaller colleges and universities.

These numbers today are a reflection of that constitutional commitment of 1850 which has been passed from generation to generation of faculty and students: the strength of the University has been in its willingness to pursue "a system of education adapted to the wants of the country."

Since 1850 Wesleyan has changed as public interests and needs have changed. Over the years we have added or created Schools of Music, Art, Drama and Nursing. And over the years we have had, and discontinued, a College of Law and a School of Oratory.

If our strength has come from adaptation to public need in the past, the same pattern must be especially true in the future.

I could talk here about strengths and plans in the humanities, in the social sciences and in the liberal arts generally. I could describe in some detail what is going on in our Schools of Art, Music and Drama. I could talk about exciting new directions in Nursing. I could talk about plans for developing our facilities in sports, athletics and recreation, but these are topics for other times, many other times. I turn now to science.

The National Science Foundation has been studying projections on scientists with care and with alarm.

The late 1990's will see many retirements in education and business of those who took Ph.D.s in the 1940's, 1950's and early 1960's. The number of 18-year-olds will increase again, and research and development efforts will generate new positions.



*Detail from
Buck Memorial Library*

If current trends continue, America will experience a widening deficit of scientists with each passing year. In the year 2004 we will likely produce 10,000 fewer Ph.D.'s in science, mathematics and engineering than we are projected to need. If all levels of scientific training are considered, (Bachelors, Masters and Doctors), NSF projects will be short hundreds of thousands of scientifically-trained personnel by 2006.

These are numbers which should frighten everyone interested in the future of America, or the future of the globe.

Science has for our generations become not just a technology of discovery, but a craft of faith and hope in an almost religious sense. My grandmother died of pneumonia in 1928, and I have lived my life in the belief that had antibiotics been perfected earlier I would have known her as a child. As a child I worried about polio. Today I am not sure Minor and Jeff even know what it is.

The news is full of images. A child dies of hunger in the Sudan, a plane crashes with 150 people aboard because of the failure of metals, dead fish wash ashore after an oil spill, and earthquakes and disease ravage a community.

We assume that disease, famine, crashes, almost anything we regard as a problem, can be prevented or alleviated through science if we can but pose the right research questions with adequate funds.

And each year the number of tasks assigned to science for solution grows. Vannevar Bush, that great advocate of public support for the sciences in the 1940's, led scientific planning after the Second World War. His report on science was entitled, Science, The Endless Frontier, and what a prophetic title it was.



*Detail from
Presser Hall*

Whether it is the intricacies of the mind, or sorting out the geology of hitherto unimagined moons of Neptune, scientists today are working on problems not even imagined when Bush wrote.

We assume there is little science cannot understand: it is, indeed, an endless frontier. But given our expectations Bush could just as easily have taken as his title *Science: the Endless Task*.

Terence, the Roman playwright of the 2nd century B.C., coined a motto for many humanists: *Nihil humani generi a me alienum puto*. Nothing which pertains to man is alien to me. For our era that phrase could be transformed as a guide to what we expect of science: *Nihil humani generi a scientiis alienum est*. Nothing which pertains to humanity is alien to the sciences. In dealing with disasters and fears, other centuries prayed. We pray too, but we fund scientific research as well.

But who will undertake the endless task in fifteen years? Our scientists will be the students who are in the colleges and schools today. Those who entered this fall will graduate in 1993, and, all going well, take Ph.D.'s in 1996 or 1997 if they move fast indeed.

We must work as communities, as cities, as nations and as a globe to increase their numbers. Let me outline the present pipeline, as the NSF calls it. To get just one new Ph.D. (and the NSF estimates that in 2004 we will need 18,000 new Ph.D.'s): to get one new Ph.D. in science, math or engineering, we must start with 412 high school students. Surveys show that most scientists had developed an orientation toward science by age 18, and of those 412 high school students, only 75 will show an interest in science by age 18. Thirty-five will enter



*Detail from
Bush Memorial Library*

college as freshmen interested in science, math or engineering, and of that number 21 will graduate with science degrees. Of that number only 7 will go on to graduate school, 5 will complete a master's degree and one will complete a Ph.D.

The pipeline is a system which leaks all the way. Our tasks are then to expand the pipeline and fix the leaks.

The easier task may be to fix the leaks.

First, we and other colleges must enhance the quality of undergraduate education in ways which encourage more students to go on to serious scientific study. Several years ago, Oberlin discovered that the small liberal arts institutions were, as a group, contributing a disproportionate share of the nation's science talent. The reasons seemed easy to discover. Students who had a chance to engage in real research under the direction of a senior professor became converts. They wanted a lifetime of sharing in the excitement.

Such research requires several things: student interest, faculty time, research space and research equipment. Here we are well blessed with student interest and faculty talent, but here and elsewhere much must be done to enhance the other factors which contribute to this critical senior level experience.

Second, leaks can be fixed by simply encouraging more students to go on for Ph.D.'s. Fifteen years ago a Ph.D. was good preparation for driving a taxi or waiting tables. But today things are different.

Third, we must enhance our science facilities so that an outstanding faculty and student body can prosper and feed the pipeline. Laboratories are necessary for freshman teaching as well as senior research.



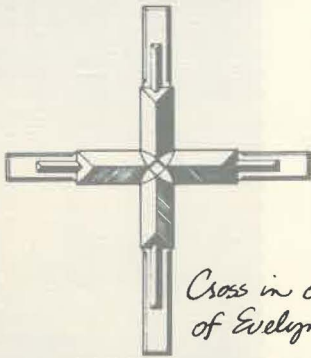
*Detail from
Presser Hall*

To this end we are now engaged in planning new science facilities which will meet the needs of our students and serve the interests of the country. These will be costly, and effort will be needed to raise the funds, but it is a commitment that this generation and this era must make to those who will follow.

If we can stop a few leaks on the campus, we need also to widen the pipeline supply of those headed towards the campus through close cooperation of schools and colleges.

We have one unusual feature of our academic procession today, one which I hope will be repeated on many campuses. We have invited the superintendents and principals of local schools to be present and to march with us. We do this as a symbol of that educational partnership which we must build at all

levels. If we can explore the moons of Neptune close up, a partnership is surely possible to produce more scientists by encouraging more students, particularly women and minorities, to develop an interest in scientific careers.



*Cross in oculus
of Evelyn Chapel*

In thinking about new directions, the example of John Wesley himself may be a model to keep in mind.

Wesley, of course, was the founder of the Methodist denomination which gave rise to the University.

I do not mean to discuss here Wesley's real interest in medicine nor his doctrines. But Wesley as a person could stand as a model, even to an atheist.

Wesley was a man blessed with three gifts:

1. his devotion to doing good.
2. his boundless energy in doing it.
3. his unnerving joy in doing it.

By his own account he travelled some 5,000 miles a year on horseback, rose at 4:00 a.m. every day, preached for the first time at 5:00 a.m., preached an average of twice a day, and he followed such a schedule almost until his death at age 88. He made a lot of money from many activities, gave it to the needy and disciplined himself to live on £28 a year.

His efforts were unremitting throughout a lifetime, yet one friend said of his old age, "So fine a man I never saw. The happiness of his mind beamed forth in his countenance. Wherever Wesley went, he diffused a portion of his own felicity."

All this was easy for him because he sensed he was a person with a mission. He had survived a childhood fire which should have killed him, and he came to think he had been saved for a purpose.

But the real moment of conviction came on Wednesday, May 24, 1738. He was then 35. That afternoon he had attended St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and in the evening he went to a religious meeting, as he noted "very unwillingly." At this session one of Martin Luther's tracts was being read. He must have been bored. Wesley recorded what happened in his journal. "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed." In these simple words Wesley records his religious rebirth, the moment of his conversion. His life was never the same. His mind had been put in the mood for that deep feeling by the music he heard at St. Paul's, and documents at the Cathedral show that the music he heard that memorable day was William Croft's "Out of the Deep," based on Psalm 130, the piece we have just heard.



*Detail from
Buck Memorial Library*

I do not expect the piece to make converts, but do take it as a reminder of an influential soul transformed.

Why do I speak of Wesley? Here I am, a non-Methodist, talking about science, and it sounds like a sermon.

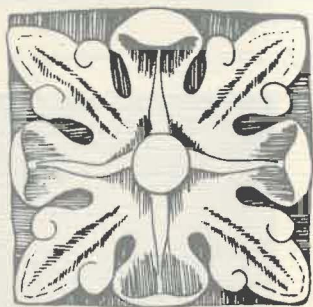
Wesley's was a voice which moved a country. More than one historian has thought that had there been a French Wesley the French Revolution of 1789 might have taken a different turn. Wesley, through heroic personal efforts, reached thousands. When he and George Whitfield preached to miners who had hitherto been ignored, many stood with tears streaming down their coal-blackened faces. Someone heard and someone touched their souls and their lives, and England's life was never the same.

It is precisely that evangelical enthusiasm which gave rise to the Methodist Church and this University. And it is precisely that evangelical spirit which is needed by American science today.

Speakers have all but worn out audience patience about science demographics. Some in this community may even be embarrassed that I am speaking on such a passe topic. Yet what has been the effect of that rhetoric?

Yesterday I reviewed some recent trends with Dr. Betty Vetter, the Executive Director of the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology in Washington. She is generally regarded as the best head counter on science.

Here's the report card. Numbers for 1987 are just out. After several years of public discussion, the number of bachelors, masters and doctorates in science are down. And she expects that trend to continue for at least three years. On international standardized tests, American 17-year-olds rated 12th out of 13 countries reporting scores in biology, 11th out of 13 in



*Detail from
Buck Memorial Library*

chemistry and 13th out of 13 in physics. More countries were compared in math where we were 17th out of 17. Japan is probably now producing more science graduates that we are each year, and the Soviet Union is producing about twice as many.

Our task here, as in every institution, is not to dwell on what is wrong, but to build with joy on what is right.

There are many outstanding programs and as universities, schools and corporations we need to build constructively on what is good.

There is great hope. Illinois Wesleyan University has an outstanding faculty which continues to attract strong students to

science in numbers other universities would envy.

In the schools there are good signs, at least at home. Our Jeff, age 8, was asked to write about the "habitat" of a hamster, and he began to see his pets in a new light. Minor, age 11—grade 6, last week was sorting out amoebas, paramecia and euglena, work which for me came in 10th grade. I was much impressed with the work Mrs. Fisher was demanding, and getting, from her class.

In Bedford, New York, there is a magnetic high school teacher named Steven Kluge. I learned about him from a prospective student, and went to visit. He teaches geoscience at Fox Lane High School, and his classroom must be regarded as an American natural resource. His students work hard, they go on field trips, they go on mapping trips, asking at the high school level original research questions. Their eyes beamed as they described how their mapping of striae reveal paths of Pleistocene glaciers. Kluge has to throw

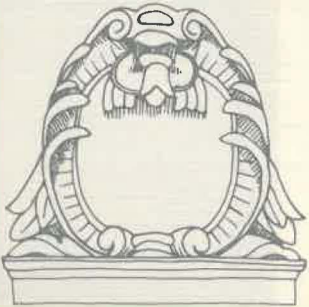


*Detail from
Presser Hall*

the kids out of the lab at the end of the day. He has taught them to make rock sections for microanalysis and at least two of them were making them for fun. Even as high school students they have aspirations to going on to graduate school.

America needs John Wesleys of science. They are out there. We all have our own lists, and Steven Kluge is on mine. They are the people at every educational level who can expand the science pipeline.

If Wesley reached new groups left out of earlier religions, our scientific Wesleys need to follow that model too. We need talent wherever we can find it. Women are now entering most science and engineering fields, but not all, in encouraging numbers. But minorities have a lot of progress to make before they are fully in the fold, particularly in the sciences. Five states already have a majority of minority population: New Mexico, Alabama, Texas, Hawaii and Mississippi. California becomes a minority-majority state this year, and Illinois does next year. We need their talents, and right now it is not clear they are in the pipelines.



*Detail from
Prosser Hall*

This room represents a partnership. It is a partnership of the student, faculty, administration and trustees of IWU, but it also represents the partnership of higher education through space and time — from Oxford in 1214, Wesley's own university, to the last decades; from the states of America, and the provinces of Canada, to the countries of Europe — including the Soviet Union and Asia. A procession initially represented the faculties of universities, but I am pleased to say that many of the delegates here are alumni, that body which brings strength to every campus today. And many are from the business

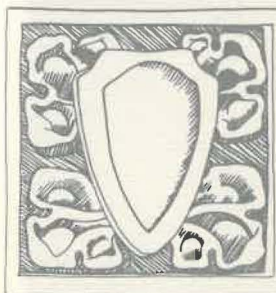
community, leaders of industry, banking and commerce. Let me point to one man as symbolic of the whole of science, of the world community of learning. Yoichi Nakane is with us today, a graduate of Nagoya University in Japan and head of the Mitsubishi Diamond Star facility in Bloomington/Normal. He is one of five Nagoya graduates in Bloomington/Normal.

Wesley saw religion without national boundaries, and so too science is an international venture in the same mode. Each country looks to science as its economic base, yet all countries must work at science as their global hope. Questions of technology transfer may plague problems of cooperation, but as Nakane-san knows, every continent now sees the need for more science. The promotion of science is in the self interest of every American and every global corporation.

And our task as liberal arts institutions is never to let science forget the humanistic and humane setting in which science must take place.

"Except the Lord build a house, they labor in vain that build it." Wesley had no doubt what he was doing, that when he acted the Lord was building his house through him. He got up at 4:00 a.m. and proceeded with every assurance, building his community aimed at the good of the country. So too, like Wesley before us, we must work with that same determination and conviction.

Mr. Henning, I accept your charge with humility and anticipation. I shall do my part to tend that house which is Illinois Wesleyan University — ever mindful that it is passed to us as students and faculty, even as we shall pass it, changed yet strengthened, to other generations, "for the wants of the country."



*Detail from
Buck Memorial Library*