

Paul: Good morning everyone.

Speaker 2: Morning.

Paul: Welcome to Weckesser Hall.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

Paul: On behalf of Wilkes University and the Michelini family, I send our welcome to all of you to this service and memory, and celebration of the life of Francis J. Michelini. And what a blessing it is to have so many wonderful friends of Wilkes here with us today. We're delighted that our Trustee Emeritus Mrs. Davidowitz is here today. And Mrs. Ralston, too who have played such an integral role in the history of Wilkes.

Paul: We're delighted to have you here today. We're delighted the members of the Michelini family are here today. Michelle, Cia, Lisa, David, second cousin Joe Marchetti. [crosstalk 00:00:56] Joe actually brought me back to work here at Wilkes many, many years ago with Dean Ralston. Joe was the Director of Housing. He preceded me in that role before I started here, so we go back a long, long ways.

Paul: And when we talk about the history of Wilkes, I wanted to point out something to me is very special. I'm looking for ... Where is Ben?

Speaker 2: Ben.

Paul: Ben Feister, who is the Professor Emeritus of English at this University. And has been teaching continuously at Wilkes since 1956.

Speaker 2: Woo!

Paul: We're also delighted that some of Dr. Mike's close friends with whom he worked at AICUP are here today. Tim Alexander, Cindy Dunkin, Mary Young made the trip up from Harrisburg so we're so, so very appreciative of them.

Paul: Through the words spoken today we're going to honor Dr. Mike as a Professor, a Dean, a President, a husband, a father, a grandfather and friend, and colleague. Today we'll share memories and stories of a remarkable life. This service provides us the opportunity to contemplate all the lives Dr. Mike has touched.

Paul: And for each of us to think about how his life has impacted ours. And how fitting it is to do the whole of this service here in Weckesser Hall. Dr. Mike spent 17 years of his career in this building and in this office right here in this corner. One that I'm privileged to be in.

- Paul: Working each and every day to improve the quality of life and learning for all who passed through this school's campus. And this dedication of Wilkes continued long after leaving the presidency at Wilkes. His commitment to chronicling the history of Wilkes, a project he began with Dr. Breiseth provided the opportunity for him to return to campus frequently to share his own memories and to help to organize the memories of others. Dr. Mike visited campus several times each year. Whether it was for his work on the art projects or for his semiannual dentist appointment.
- Paul: He would arrive in Mechanicsburg in a red convertible camero and parked in a spot reserved for him out back. He'd faithfully make his way into our building and share his warm greeting with all of us. I was particularly blessed because I do have the fortune of occupying the same office he used during his time as Dean of Academic Affairs and president. And as he should have had the privilege he would walk into my office unannounced and always offer a warm embrace. My office was a favorite destination, not just for the memories that it evoked, but because it always houses the set of bulletins and catalogs that stand in Bucknell Junior College, Wilkes College, and Wilkes University.
- Paul: He loved to pull out a bulletin from the 1950's or the 1960's and reminisce about his colleagues and he'd thumb through the pages reflecting on the curriculum of that day. Never the dying anecdote during his visits. He was always eager to work, energetic in his approach, earnest in his love for Wilkes, entertaining as he regaled us and always with a warmth in words that made us always feel better about ourselves.
- Paul: The story I'll always remember is the one he told me about Mrs. Weckesser and Dr. Farley. This story has to go back to the 1950's because Mrs. Weckesser was still living here and this being her home even after Mr. And Mrs. Weckesser had willed their home to Wilkes, she would see Dr. Farley and yelled at him from her second floor bedroom, in jest you'd think. "I'm still here Gene, you can't have my house yet." Now knowing what we know about both of them I'm not sure who would have had the stronger will, no pun intended. But I'll tell there are some who work here today that still think Mrs. Weckesser is here.
- Paul: Well Dr. Mike honored Wilkes in many ways. As a member of the faculty, as it's first Academic Dean, and as it's second president and as president Emeritus. Each of us have our own personal remembrances of Dr. Mike and each of us will feel his loss in different ways. We're privileged this morning to be able to listen to the remembrances of Dr. Thomas Kelly, Dr. Christopher Breiseth and Dr. Mike's daughter Lisa Spengler. Tom's, Chris's, and Lisa's unique perspectives of Dr. Mike's life and their thoughts about his sense of self will help each of us remember the special memories he's had and to think about how he's touched and influenced all of us.
- Paul: It will be my privilege to introduce each of our speakers this morning and after each one of them finishes, I'll return to close the program.

Paul: Our first speaker this morning is Dr. Tom Kelly. Dr. Thomas Kelly presently serves the board , professor of strategic management and business ethics at Binghamton University and the state university of New York. He also serves as the university vice president of External Affairs for 15 years. He was dean of the school of management for six years and professor of management for 30 years. His PhD is with Cornell University, his Master's degree from Lehigh University and his Bachelor's Degree from Wilkes College in 1969. Just celebrated this year at homecoming the 50th anniversary of that class. He's also completed the certificate program of higher education from the Amos Tuck school of management at Dartmouth. And Dr. Kelly serves Wilkes College working closely with Dr. Farley but then as director of development for President Michelini and dean of external affairs for President Capin. I'm delighted to introduce to you a friend and a mentor Dr. Thomas Kelly.

Dr. Kelly: Thank you Paul, you brought back many wonderful memories as you spoke of my work with these first three gentleman who's photograph's are on the wall, who's paintings are on the wall and of course I didn't work for Chris Breiseth but I have worked with him on projects. So it's good to be with you this morning.

Dr. Kelly: All heroes have special moments. And Dr. Mike as we affectionately call him, was indeed a hero from my perspective. His heroic moment was in June of 1972, following the hurricane Agnes plight. And it took place in the parking lot behind Weckesser hall. That catastrophic event all 52, then 52 of Wilkes buildings were inundated to at least the ceiling of the first floor. After the flood waters receded, Dr. Mike called upon faculty and staff to assemble. Many of us were dealing with flood damage to our own homes at the time. Where we were living temporarily with relatives and friends or in Red Cross shelters but we found our way to him.

Dr. Kelly: There in the Weckesser parking lot we waited, standing in the mud. Unclear as to what president Michelini would tell us. And as we stood there we wondered and we talked quietly to each other as to whether Wilkes would survive or if it did, in what diminished state that would be. Would Wilkes have now to cut costs so drastically that some of us would lose our jobs over the coming year or indeed over the coming months. Would students return to Wilkes or would they transfer elsewhere? Would freshman parents allow their sons and daughters to enroll to such a damaged campus. These are the thoughts that we had at that moment.

Dr. Kelly: Amidst that uncertainty and the devastation in the Wilkes-Barre area and other surrounding communities Dr. Mike stood with us in the mud with a blow horn in his hand. Confidently he told us that Wilkes would not only survive but it would merge as a stronger and better institution. He emphasized that we would open our doors in September. He emphasized that we would communicate with students and parents and tell them the Wilkes campus would be cleaned up and would be ready for them.

- Dr. Kelly: Frankly, as we listened we gulped because we knew we only had two short months in which to make this happen. However, Dr. Mike assured us that we could do it because saving Wilkes was a noble and worthy task and he knew we had the spirit of commitment to make it happen. And then, and then he reminded us of what education is all about. He said that good education takes place when you have good faculty and good students interacting. And he said that at Wilkes we had a very good faculty and talented students under gerted by an effective administration and that none of this had been damaged in the flood. And that all of this could become the pillars on which we rebuilt Wilkes.
- Dr. Kelly: Dr. Mike said that he would ask us to work harder and longer than we had ever worked. Some of us would do manual labor in addition to our regular jobs. Others would be given new and challenging tasks. But he said that this was a historic opportunity and that if we would rise to the occasion. His inspiration was contagious. His confidence made our spirits rise and we began to become ready for the task.
- Dr. Kelly: Throughout the next month we would report every morning there in the parking lot to get our assignments for the day. However, my assignment was a bit different and I will segway to it to illuminate another amazing quality that Dr. Mike possessed. Dr. Mike gave me a battlefield position of sorts one day in that parking lot. Because I had worked with Dr. Farley on institutional advancement and fund raising, Dr. Mike immediately promoted me to the position of the director of development, I'm only 25 years of age at the time. And he told me to get to work up on the third floor of Weckesser Hall which is not damaged in the flood. I tend to find foundations and corporations and individuals outside of Wyoming Valley who might be helpful in making gifts to enable us to restore the college.
- Dr. Kelly: He also asked me to contact member of the board trustees to see if there were individuals within their professional networks who might open doors or assist us. And through that process, one individual who agreed to help us was former Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton he opened many doors for us and made contacts on our behalf. And you all know that he went on to become the United States Ambassador to the United Nations. Throughout that summer, Dr. Mike and I flew to places like Pittsburgh, Detroit, Battle Creek. And we drove to Philadelphia and New York City more than I can ever remember. We visited foundations liked to Richard King Mellon Foundation, the U.S. Steel Foundation, the Gulf Oil Foundation, the Kresge, Kellogg Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Ford Motors Fund, and a few charitable trusts to mention only a few.
- Dr. Kelly: In each one of these visits, Dr. Mike was so articulate, so explicit that I felt as though the program officers listening to him could feel, see, and smell the mud that we told them covered everything on our campus. In a poignant moment Dr. Mike would tell these program officers how we stood in a lower level of the library trying to salvage books that had fallen into the mud when the library stacks split open thus dumping the books into the wet mud. And he told them

how this theme replicated itself whether he went to our gymnasium, our center for the performing arts, our laboratories or our classrooms.

Dr. Kelly: Dr. Mike came across as someone who was a charismatic leader with great energy and a great strategic plan to restore Wilkes. The program officers saw his commitment, not only to the task, but his inherent commitment to Wilkes itself. I could see the respect rising in their eyes as they listened to him. No one, no one could have been more articulate, more persuasive or more sincere than Dr. Michelini in that moment. In the end Wilkes received a large grant from almost every foundation, corporation, or individual with whom we met. His grace and skill in communicating with people served as a sterling example for me as I later would develop my career. And those qualities also served Dr. Michelini well as he developed his career going on to be president, excuse me, commission great independent colleges and universities in Pennsylvania, now the association of independent colleges and universities of Pennsylvania. And in the process he would receive seven honorary doctoral degrees and be appointed to multiple gubernatorial commissions of importance among other accomplishments.

Dr. Kelly: Now for me I'd like to add a touch of humor because in traveling with Dr. Michelini, I quickly learned that whenever he was in a new major city he liked to go to a good delicatessen and have a thick corn beef sandwich in rye with a kosher pickle. So almost always did that. Later Bob Capin and I when we travel together, we'll do that as well.

Dr. Kelly: And I also learned that Dr. Michelini was fond of Chinese food. And so we almost always went to a good Chinese restaurant for dinner. Fortunately for me, I learned to like both of those cuisines. In the meantime back on campus, the flood recovery continued. The money that we raised provided unrestricted, flexible dollars to compliment the large amount of federal aide that had begun arriving. Including a \$4 million dollar check brought by President Richard Nixon to this very hallway and presented to Dr. Michelini.

Dr. Kelly: But the federal aide came with restrictions as to its occupation. So both the unrestricted private funds as well as the larger amount of federal funds were important to resuscitating Wilkes. And as the summer wore on we were able to open our doors to students that September. All of this had worked well on campus because we respected and loved Dr. Mike. All of this worked well off campus because the people with whom we met respected and trusted him.

Dr. Kelly: When Wilkes faced perhaps its most significant threat in its history. When Wilkes surely needed to have a hero to lead us through that ordeal Dr. Michelini was there. And Wilkes can be forever grateful.

Dr. Kelly: But every hero needs to have in their family those who love and support them. This was true of Dr. Mike's wife, Ann Marie, and their three daughters Michelle, Sia, and Lisa. They were Dr. Mike's A-team in Germany, sustaining his efforts at Wilkes. Lisa recently told me that within the past few weeks of her mother and her cleaning mud off classroom chairs in the Weckesser parking lot and I

reflected on that comment. And I member seeing both of you do that. Such was their commitment to Dr. Mike's work. NOTE: Cleaning mud off chairs at the back of West River Street, President's Home.

Dr. Kelly: In that spirit, we extend our deepest sympathy to Michelle, Cia, and Lisa. And we thank them for lending this extraordinary individual to us at Wilkes for we are all the better for having known Dr. Mike.

Dr. Kelly: My final thoughts today go to a conversation that I had with Dr. Michelini about a year ago when I walked with him to his car here at near the Sordoni Art Gallery. He and Dr. Breiseth had invited me to come down and spend a day with them. It was a sunny October day much the same as today and after we finished talking and I gave them some oral history I decided to walk with Dr. Mike to his car. On that walk he said to me, "You know Tom at my age I'm beginning to become more curious about the afterlife." And I couldn't help but saying humorously, "Well I am too, but let's not find out about it too soon." And he laughed as you know he would laugh. And then as he opened his car door he turned back to me and he said, "I think the afterlife is not to be feared to be explored."

Dr. Kelly: And in that spirit let me know quote by paraphrasing an old Gaelic blessing. (Clock ringing) - how fitting. An old Gaelic blessing for Dr. Mike: May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back, may the sun shine brightly and warmly on your shoulders, and may the rain fall gently upon your fields. And may the good Lord hold you Dr. Mike in the very hallow of his great hands.

Dr. Kelly: Thank you.

Paul: Thank you Tom for those words and perspective that only you could share with us. Dr. Christopher N. Breiseth was appointed the fourth president at Wilkes University and as president Emeritus. Prior to arriving at Wilkes College he was president at Deep Springs College and served on the faculty at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts and at Sangamon State University now known as the University of Illinois in Springfield. Dr. Breiseth earned his degrees at UCLA, Oxford, and Cornell University. He did post doctoral work at the University of Chicago. During his presidency Wilkes achieved University status, began the pharmacy program and major construction projects were completed including the Art Center, the Henry Student Center, the Munson Fieldhouse, and the building now known as Breiseth Hall, used to be known as COB remember?

Dr. Breiseth: I do.

Paul: It was respectfully called the Classroom and Office Building in the earlier years. Early for schedules abbreviated to COB, happily today it is known as Breiseth Hall. And of course he established the center quad angle an important step to creating the campus that we've developed today. After leaving Wilkes Dr.

Breiseth was appointed as the president of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute in Hyde Park, New York. He currently is the chair of the Francis Perkins Center in New Castle, Maine working to preserve the legacy of the New Deal. Please let me introduce another friend and mentor Dr. Breiseth.

Dr. Breiseth: I need my water for my cold. I apologize. And those catalogs, by the way, where above the mud. So they survived in there place.

Dr. Breiseth: My first meeting with Dr. Mike was in the office here at Weckesser Hall which we both occupied during our presidency. At the time, 1984, Mike was president for the CICU as you just heard umm provided leadership for one of the many independent colleges and universities in Pennsylvania. He was visiting me as one of the CICU member presidents. I told him my major anxiety in becoming president of Wilkes the first outsider in that roll since Dr. Farley came in 1936; was the prospect of handling a major flood. I knew that the key advisor for that feared possibility was Francis Michelini. Who led, as we spoke for awhile already, he led us through that flood experience.

Dr. Breiseth: When we sat down to talk, I told him of my anxiety and asked him to relay his flood story. Dr. Mike began to describe in great detail what had happened. And how he and the college family and his own family, faculty, staff, and students and other family members responded to the massive destruction. He described the water level in our office. And he pointed towards the desk, it had been too heavy to float and it's top was about flood level, but after the flood waters receded he was able to return to the office he found on the top of the desk a check from the foundation of united college and universities for \$25,000. Taken to the bank in Hazleton, it became the cash the college depended on for food, shovels, mortgage payments for faculty and staff and other essentials for the Wilkes family.

Dr. Breiseth: In relating this situation, pointing to where the check lay untouched by the water, he began to sob. I moved over and held him for what I would guess was at least two or three minutes. My sobbing, loudly, I was not a dry eye either. According to him, it was the first time he had talked about the flood extensively since he'd stepped down as president in 1975. This emotional encounter sealed our friendship as we talked about it often. As an event in our life, he says, "you know I think I was suffering from PTSD and that was the expression of it."

Dr. Breiseth: Even before the flood Dr. Mike faced the awesome challenge in succeeding Wilkes college's founding father Dr. Farley who was a major interpreter as seated as Essie Davidowitz. Admiral Harold Stark, shortly after 1960, speaking before Board of Trustees had pressed president Farley to appoint a dean with whom he could share his administrative responsibilities. The Admiral reminded Dr. Farley the college had to be prepared to break in a new leader should anything happen to the president just as an able ship needed such back up if it's captain's lost. Dr. Farley asked Mike to be that dean. Assuming he position was delayed a year while Mike studied here at the National Science Foundation in Washington, focusing on developing science research opportunities for

undergraduate students. A roll Wilkes was pioneering at the time. This is of course post Sputnik we were trying to recover our science mojo.

Dr. Breiseth: Finally in 1963 Dr. Mike became Wilkes first dean, a position he held for seven years. During his deanship and in the early years of his presidency Mike created an academic structure involving three separate divisions. One of his colleagues Ben Feister continuously he took the abuse of that position and was sharing with two other colleagues. Such innovation was extremely challenging for Mike and his colleagues after the centralized leadership style of Dr. Farley.

Dr. Breiseth: On top of the financial imperative dictated by the flood recovery effort President Michelini confronted demands that would have been daunting for the most seasoned college or university professor. Several folks who knew the college well during this period suggested that Wilkes had been saved by the flood. The urgency of everyone pulling together to make Wilkes survive, which they did under Dr. Mike leadership. Temporarily buried the severe organizational tensions created by the divisional structure reforms and designs; and moved Wilkes into the post Farley era.

Dr. Breiseth: I have the singular pleasure of bestowing the Honorary Degree. Doctor of Science, on Dr. Michelini on January 24th, 1991. And part of the citation is as follows: Wilkes College of the 1960's during your deanship enjoyed a kind of golden age thanks to no small part to your leadership. You were chosen by the trustees to do the impossible. Replace the founding father of Wilkes College as president in 1970. In this elegant and demanding roll you systematically began the process of sharing the responsibility and authority with the faculty, an absolute imperative if Wilkes College were to achieve academic maturity. In the midst of this constant result effort the college and the valley were devastated by Hurricane Agnes. With hard hat and motorboat, shovel and rope you lead your colleagues to rebuild the college. As commanding general of Operation Snapback, you helped bring Wilkes to victory in one of the most striking comebacks from disaster of any college in American history. You mobilized the campus, the community, and the country from City Hall to the White House to draw together the necessary resources to rebuild Wilkes College.

Dr. Breiseth: Throughout the transition from Dr. Farley's more than three decades of leadership to the shared governance of faculty and administration of your presidency and throughout the exhausting and occasionally exhilarating rebuilding after the flood. You were tough and tender, indefatigable and loving of this place. Your personal sacrifices helped Wilkes to emerge triumphant. And I should say able to survive. During the last eight years of Dr. Mike's life, and inspired by his leadership and enthusiasm, Suzanna can tell you that, surviving past presidents of Wilkes gathered together first to prepare a memorandum for the new president Patrick Leahy, which reflected our shared vision of Wilkes.

Dr. Breiseth: We thought at the time there's probably no other college in the country that would have all the surviving presidents, save Dr. Farley, come together in an effort to define what we thought was most important for this place. We were

very different, we had different experiences, but we did this. And we produced a document that will be in the archives. We then began an oral history project to capture the Wilkes story. Starting while Bob Capin was still alive we began interviewing key figures among faculty, staff, prestiges, and alumni with the assistance of the succeeding archivist crucial perspective of Jim Rodechko who was recovering from surgery and couldn't be with us today.

Dr. Breiseth: Mike was the very spirit of this effort. His faithful maintenance of records from his time at Wilkes in his three ring notebook. Which his three daughters know more about. Will be among the most valuable historical documents of his twenty years at Wilkes from 1955 to 1975. After our many interviewing sessions Mike was stimulated at home to record further memories and observations often in the middle of the night. And he would send us an email and emails were not a single page, often two, three, four pages. And before our last visit, Tim Gilmore said, "You know the next time we're going to have to go to the campus quick." Tim organized all the emails that Mike put together which was a 33 page of these reminiscences to help guide the continuation project.

Dr. Breiseth: Our last time here was on August 27th when we interviewed Helen Ralston. Before that on July 17th, which I think was the last of his recorded reminiscences, Mike recorded some vivid memories of the flood that captured his voice on the centinal challenge of this presidency at this time that so beautifully presented. And I think it's fitting that his last reminisces where of the flood. He recalled the last stop in a college building before the evacuation was imperative. Then he recalled entering Weckesser Hall for the first time after water had receded. Finally he recalled entering the Darte center with Al Groh to get the first view of the damage.

Dr. Breiseth: This is by Dr. Mike and by the way beautifully written off the top of his head so I hope you hear his voice. I left the Farley Library to start back to Weckesser, I would ask any passerby if they'd seen anyone still in any of the campus buildings. One person yelled out that they'd seen Bill Gasparro going back into the music building wing of the Darte Center. I shifted gears and took off for the music building where someone running out of the building said Mr. Gasparro just went down in the basement. I ran down the steps screaming for Bill to get the H--- out of there immediately. Bill's self defined mission was to open all circuit breakers in the electrical supply box and also to chase the building resident cat of all things, out of the basement to safety. He did, capital letters, get the cat to run up the stairs and with his flashlight actually got to the electrical box, disconnected all circuit breakers, all the basement lights went out and with just the flashlight burning we could see jets of water squirting out through the seams of the concrete floor.

Dr. Breiseth: The hydrostatic pressure from the river was forcing water into the basement. That convinced Bill to leave and we were up and out as fast as legs could carry. I think that means the last two Wilkes personnel to actually leave the campus before the buildings began to flood.

- Dr. Breiseth: And the second recalling his re-entry into Weckesser Hall after the waters receded and finding the check. Mike then describes his entering the Dart Center with Al Groh, the man most responsible for designing and establishing this premier space at Wilkes for music and theater and special lectures. [inaudible 00:35:37] Dr. Mike the almost surreal entrance to a truly flooded building was with Al Groh entering the theater component of the Dorothy Dixon Dart Center via flashlight. I had no specific recollection of Al and I winding up entering the theater lobby but we were alone and that was the first building we had access to. I think Al had his keys out before the last boat was back on it's trailer and we wound up being the first college officials, I know, to enter a flooded college building. No one had any notion of what to expect. My first review was, "Gee, not bad."
- Dr. Breiseth: The stairway to the entrance to the theater had some lighting equipment where someone had left it while evacuating the building. I guess they being the lights that were quite expensive were also the easiest things to move and someone had been in the process of carrying them to safety when the evacuation sirens go off. Like the library books left on the steps with abrupt signs of those that the dikes had been breached were reflected in my first entry to a flooded building.
- Dr. Breiseth: By the time you reached the upper foyer and open the doors entering the theater, it was black as pitch. It must have the day time but the theater itself was totally black. Actually very hard to describe. We had and quickly got flashlights and started to explore the theater. Seats were all over the place simply walked down the aisle towards the stage. Suddenly Al grabbed my arm and stopped me and I realized the next step down was only thick mud. There are photos that show the transition to the flooded theater so abruptly. Its so hard to visualize. From clean fabric theater seats and clean carpets to the abrupt decent into muddy garbage dump was almost incomprehensible. The stage was a huge pile of junk. Two 18 month old Steinway pianos, the college had worked and saved for were crashed into a pile on the stage. Anything loose had floated and found it's way onto the theater stage.
- Dr. Breiseth: The first thing we did in the flood recovery was to find loose chairs to block off portions of the stage that were no longer there. How do you describe that as a first clean up method? Dr. Mike and I had many blessings in common. First and foremost were our families, and our lovely and always supportive wives, Anne Marie and Jane. And three daughters each, Michelle, Lisa, and Cia. And I Abigail, Erika, and Lydia. One of our great moments together was when Mike's daughter were given a tour of our shared house at 30 West River Street by Jane's and my daughters. Support of our presidency by these eight women was crucial to Mike's and to my abilities to make the contributions we made to Wilkes.
- Dr. Breiseth: And they made their own distinct contributions to the life and health of the college. Michelle and Lisa during the past year were indispensable to enabling their father to continue his crucial contributions up here in Wilkes-Barre to our Wilkes project. Rest in peace Dr. Mike.

- Paul: Thank you Chris. Your words and sentiments can only be spoken by someone who shared the office and the friendship with Dr. Mike. Lisa Michelini Spengler, Dr. Mike's daughter. And just as the case with my children and Chris's children, Lisa spent her formative years here at Wilkes. She's frequently returned to campus with her dad for special occasions and visits. We're delighted that she along with Michelle and Cia could be with us today. Lisa's going to share some reflections with us.
- Lisa: Thank you Dr. Adams, Dr. Kelly, Dr. Breiseth, thank you for sharing. You all talked about my dad being a professor, a dean, and a president, but to my sisters and I he was our dad. I struggled with what to say today and then I realized that I couldn't do it alone. It wasn't about just my memories and my, about my mom and dad and being part of the Wilkes community. It was about all of us. About my sisters and I. Our childhood was spent here in Wilkes. We were born here. We went to middle- grade school, now they call it middle school. Grade school here and we went to high school. The college campus was our home. We did our homework right here in Weckesser Hall and a couple other places.
- Lisa: This is where our foundation of faith, commitment, and dedication was built. Our dad taught us genuine admiration, compassion, and respect for everyone he met, For every student, for every staff and faculty member. But most importantly he taught those values to us. So I needed my sisters to help me to write this. I asked them what some of their special memories of growing up at Wilkes and what good memories that they shared with our dad.
- Lisa: Michelle remembered that one of the highlights of our weekend was to come to Stark Hall, the science building with dad. There she would get to see white mice while he was working in the lab. Ironically I had similar thoughts about our weekend trips to Stark Hall, but were not great as white mice. I remember the, I called it the formaldehyde room, where they had these specimens floating in jars. I still have vivid, but it was never about the mice or the creatures in the jars. It was about spending time with my dad in the place that he loved, the science building.
- Lisa: To share those adventures with my dad was all that really mattered. We would cherish those memories forever. Michelle also remembered Wilkes football games. We never missed a game, especially when they were on their 32 game winning streak from 1965 to 69. Three straight eight and O seasons, numerous conference championships and trophies. Michelle's memories in later years was when it was really cold and our dad would start the white, it was then the white falcon convertible right on the sidelines and we'd watch the game from inside the car.
- Lisa: Students would walk by stopping to admire the convertible. As most of you know, anyone asking about a convertible always brought a smile to my dads face. He would then engage the students in conversation. He would make them, as he would all of us feel as if we were the most important person in the world

when he was speaking with us. He would guide them with his wisdom and his stories in a way that only he could, unassuming and gracious. He always educated and inspired with humility and unmeasurable love. He was always so generous, so encouraging, and so positive.

Lisa: That was never more evident than in June in 1972. Cia remembers that when we evacuated during hurricane Agnes she was working on a puzzle, she loved working on puzzles. My dad later told her that as the water rose the puzzle rose up on the table and as the water receded the table lower and not a piece of the puzzle was out of place. That will always be a special memory for Sia. He always knew what was most important in life.

Lisa: Hurricane Agnes was a life changing experience for all of us. For those of you who were a part of that time with my dad, thank you for sharing all your memories, but for me it was more than memories. For me it was one of the most defining moments of my life. No, it wasn't the sandbagging, or being on the dike when the side would blow, it wasn't the damage to the 52 buildings on campus and it wasn't the fact that my dad put Michelle and I in charge of the National Guard Troop, [crosstalk 00:45:53], it wasn't about the bologna sandwiches from the Salvation Army truck in the square, or the keg of beer in the back of the convertible that my dad would use to gather the campus community. And in true Dr. Mike spirit to inspire and encourage campus community so that the campus would be ready to open again in September. No my life changing moment was none of that.

Lisa: It was when I lost my dad for three days. Once the siren blew and we ran from the boat that was that last time I saw my dad for three days. I waited for him every morning. And I prayed harder than I ever had. I didn't know that my dad was out in our boat fighting with the fire fighters fighting fires and assisting in preventing the fire from spreading. I didn't know that he was rescuing people who were trapped in their homes. I didn't know that he was disconnecting electrical boxes on the street lamps. I didn't know that my dad was continually circling the campus in the boat to ensure it's safety. In that time I forgot. I forgot that my dad was my dad and that he was doing what he needed to do. And he was doing what he wanted to do. And his ability to serve went beyond his title as president. I forgot that he was doing what God had instructed him to do in the most devastating circumstances. And that's when I knew at the age of 14, that it wasn't just our hearts that were connected but it was our souls. My dad was my hero then and he always will be.

Lisa: July 29th was one my last trips to Wilkes with my dad. For some reason we went to 30 West River street. I took pictures of my dad going to the plaques marking the high water marks on March 19th, 1936 and June 23rd, 1972. I'm not sure how many knew that those plaques are there. We sat there for awhile in the red convertible, yes with the top down, and we talked about our life at Wilkes. And we talked about life and how blessed we were. As with any conversation with my dad I learned, I felt, and I listened to be guided by his wisdom and strength.

- Lisa: In 2009, my sister Michelle's daughter Erin sent her a text asking her the name of the school that Papa was at. Michelle told her Wilkes and it was then that Erin told her that she had just been offered a graduate assistant women's soccer coach position at Wilkes. Wilkes never knew her grandfather was offering her the position. And yes she accepted and was here for two years.
- Lisa: My mom passed in 2007, so with Erin coming to Wilkes, it was our life coming full circle. Words my uncle once wrote to my dad, his brother, seemed fitting at this time. To his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his step. We are truly honored and grateful to have been raised on this campus, to be part of the Wilkes family. Wilkes was our home. It will always be our home. My dad spirit is here. His legacy at Wilkes will continue for generations to come. He will continue to be a teacher and a mentor. His spirit will guide on people as they pass through Weckesser Hall and Michelini Hall. He was learning and teaching until he passed. And he will continue to teach from his heavenly life.
- Lisa: All your memories of my dad are a tribute to his life. To his loving, kind, generous, unassuming heart and spirit. On behalf of our entire family, Michelle, Cia, my cousin David, second cousin Joe Marchetti and our children Erin, Steven, Elizabeth, and Jeff, to the APAC group and state board of education colleagues and to the Wilkes family thank you for today. But more importantly thank you for loving my dad.
- Paul: Thank you for that intimate portrait of Dr. Mike. Having a resource like the Wilkes Chorus is a blessing but especially on occasions such as this. So I'm pleased to introduce to you the Wilkes University Chorus under the direction of Dr. Steven Thomas (?)
- Choir: (Singing) The Lord bless you and keep you. The lord lift his countenance upon you. And give you peace. And give you peace. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. And be gracious unto you. And be gracious, the Lord be gracious unto to you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Paul: That was beautifully done thank you so very, very much. Dr. Kelly and Lisa spoke of Dr. Mike as a hero. We know our heroes as those we have known to face the unknown as it was with Dr. Mike when Wilkes college faced it's darkest hours after hurricane Agnes. The image of hero brings to mind other heroes especially the work of the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy in his poem Ithaka. He speaks to the Greek hero Odysseus during his ten year struggle to bring Helen home to the Isle of Ithaka after the Trojan war. While the poem speaks of Odysseus's lengthy and heroic expedition it also speaks to all of us as the journey of every woman and man through life and suggests that each of us look for our own Ithaka, our ultimate goal and destination. Cavafy suggests at the end, it's not the goal but the journey that matters most. Because the journey we take makes us wise and gives us the richest good - experience, knowledge, and maturity.
- Paul: Cavafy ends his poem with these words, "Keep Ithaka always in your mind. Arriving there is what you're destined for. But don't hurry the journey at. Better

it last for years so you're old by the time you reach the island. Wealthy with all you've gained on the way. Not expecting Ithaka to make you rich. Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey. Without her you wouldn't have set out. She has nothing left to give you now and if you find her poor. Ithaka won't have fooled you. Wise as you will have become so full of experience you'll have understood by then what these Ithaka's mean." And such a journey it was that Dr. Mike traveled on his road to his Ithaka. A journey filled with faith, wisdom, and benevolence. And all of us had the blessing of being a part of that journey.

Paul:

I close with this, borrowed from the Wilkes alma mater. In our work and in our pleasure Dr. Mike has guided us as a friend. May we find the wisdom that his spirit brings. Our special thanks to Tom, Chris, and Lisa for sharing so eloquently in such a meaningful way. Dr. Mike is deserving of our best and you certainly achieved that for all of us today. Any time we can have you on campus it's a treat for us. And to thank all of you. Thank you for being here for this special remembrance. I hope you'll accept our invitation to join us for refreshments and the opportunity to share your thoughts and memories of Dr. Mike with Lisa, Cia, and Michelle. Thank you all for being here.