

Thomas R McKinnon

Walton College of Business Retirement Reception

29 April 2004

Tom and I have known each other for over 30 years. Even though we come from very different backgrounds—Tom from rural Arkansas and I from south Chicago—and some would say we even speak a different language Tom and I became friends. Knowing Tom for so long, it is difficult to decide where to start. So I would like to give a brief sketch of his life and exceptional career in education. A career that spans 43 years—33 at the UofA and 10 as a high school teacher.

TMcK:

- Was born in 1935, the same year as Elvis.
- He was born in LA—that's Lower Arkansas in case you don't know—in Parker's Chapel which is very near El Dorado and the infamous home of spud nuts—a donut made with potato flour. It is the LA equivalent of Krispy Kreme donuts—hot and greasy!
- Earned BA at Southern State College in History and Political Science in 1956, which he completed in 3 years
- After that Tom married his sweetheart, Franny, spent the honeymoon night in the Bluebird Motel in Pine Bluff, and served in the military
- Earned MEd degree at U of Arkansas in Secondary Education in 1960
- Taught high school from 1959 to 1968, serving as assistant principal part of that time, a job he didn't particularly enjoy
- I believe it was during this time that the Bessie B Moore, a shameless and nationally prominent promoter of economic education and the person for whom the Center for Economic Education is named, convinced Tom to return to school for a Ph.D.degree and help promote economic education
- Earned a Ph.D. degree at the University of Mississippi in 1972

- Joined the economics department faculty of the College of Business Administration as it was known then in 1971.

I don't believe there are many faculty at the University of Arkansas who can match TMcK's collective contributions to teaching, scholarship, and service. His many accomplishments in these areas have been recognized by the University of Arkansas Alumni Association which gave him its Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award and by his faculty peers in the Sam M. Walton College of Business who selected him as the "Best All-Around" faculty member. In 1999 he earned the title of University Professor which is a distinction given to only a few campus faculty.

TMcK has a long record of accomplishment spanning 33 years as a college professor, and has remained active throughout his career. For example, he has served as:

- Founding Co-director of both the University Teaching and Faculty Support Center and the Walton College of Business Center for Teaching Effectiveness,
- Founder of the Bessie B. Moore Center for Economic Education in Walton College of Business and its only Director since 1979
- Chair of the Campus Faculty and of the Campus Council, and member of the Faculty Senate,
- Interim Dean of the College of Business Administration,
- Board member of the Arkansas Council on Economic Education,
- Board member of Economics America Program,
- Member of Governor's Task Force on Entrepreneurship Education, and
- Executive officer in professional associations such as the Association of Private Enterprise Education and the Federation of Administrative Disciplines.

Tom has received national recognition, unprecedented at the time and perhaps never to be matched at the University of Arkansas. He not only was selected to appear on the national game show, the Price is Right, but he won a car! Which is truly remarkable. After all he's an economist and doesn't shop much. He knows a lot about what prices should be but very little about what they actually are. With a lot of luck and the help of

Franny, who was in the audience and shouted the prices of the products Tom had to correctly guess to become eligible to win the car, Tom won the car—a car that he loved.

TMcK has devoted his professional life to the practice and development of excellence in the teaching of economics.

- He organized and participated in over 200 economic education workshops to help thousands of primary and secondary school teachers develop economics curriculum for their classes.
- The Bessie B Moore Center for Economic Education has won 5 national awards for its programs, and workshop participants have won many more that number of national awards for their projects.
- Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union asked him to conduct workshops to help develop economic education programs for their schools.
- At the University of Arkansas, besides serving as co-director of the university and college teaching centers, he organized and conducted many instructional improvement programs for graduate students and served as mentor to junior faculty members.
- In recognition of his contributions to excellence in teaching, he was elected to the University of Arkansas Teaching Academy, the Arkansas Council on Economic Education designated him Master Teacher, and he received the Excellence in Teaching Economics award from National Council on Economic Education.

Besides his exceptional service to the university, professional communities, and the public. TMcK has also remained an active contributor to the scholarship of economics and economic education, publishing 40 articles in scholarly journals and presenting numerous papers at academic meetings. History of Economic Thought, or the History of Dead Economists as it is sometimes called, is his research passion. He is an avid reader whose interests are broad, extending well beyond economics.

This has been TMcK's last semester at the University of Arkansas, a time when he could have easily cut back. In fact, TMcK took on additional responsibilities by volunteering to

teach an extra class that we needed taught. That's just the type of person he is. Tom loves teaching and it shows.

But this semester Tom has been able to squeeze in a few professional international trips in what I teasingly refer to as his farewell tour. Tom loves to travel and been to many countries throughout the world. Tom is very much a family man and he tries to include his family in his professional trips as often as possible. This fall he and Franny will spend four months in Italy where Tom has been invited to teach for the semester. And after graduation he and his son, Alex, plan to back-pack into Macchu Picchu.

In short, I believe that TMcK's long, sustained, and exceptional record of accomplishment is a model for faculty at land-grant institutions that value excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service.

TMcK, so on behalf of the faculty and staff, I want to thank you for all that you have done to enrich the lives of so many people—your family, friends, students, and teachers alike. I wish you the very best. You richly deserve it.