

Excerpts: Golden Reunion Dinner Welcome for the Classes of 1930's - 1960's
October 17, 2008



The theme for Homecoming is “Pass the Torch” -- a reference to the Olympics and its great torch tradition -- and a reference to the arrival of a new president. Some cynics might say that when it comes to university presidents, the theme should be “pass the buck” or “pass the hat.” But I take seriously the notion of passing the torch.

There are some things that are so important that we simply must pass them along:

- our institutional values,
- our distinguished past,
- the legacy we inherit from each of you.

I congratulate the class of 1958 on your anniversary. Many events and activities of your era are familiar to us – even in the headlines -- today. In 1958, Paul Newman starred in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Alaska’s statehood bill was signed by Eisenhower. The cars of that era were fantastic – huge cars with big fins -- but, gas guzzlers were an issue then, as now. In 1958, Nash came out with the Rambler, a compact car. Gas was – listen

to this – 24 cents a gallon. “Tales of Wells Fargo” was a popular TV Show. Now, we are hearing plenty of stories about banks. Then it was “Father Knows Best,” and now it’s “How I Met Your Mother.” Then it was “hi-fi.” Now it’s “wi-fi.” Then it was “The \$64,000 Question.” Now it’s “Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?” Then it was “Who Do You Trust?” Now, it’s – who can you trust?

Around the campus, many things are new -- like the fantastic Recreational Sports Center and the beautiful dining hall. And, in important ways, some things have not changed at all. Students still hunt for the silver bugle and Snake Dance through campus. They still elect a Homecoming Queen, gather for the bonfire, and, of course, bang that drum. Be assured that today’s students are talented, motivated, and preparing for the future. They are making memories. And, they are making a difference on the campus and in the community.

This is a remarkable university. And it is made more so because of your continued connection to it. When I saw the words over the door of the new Alumni House, I was inspired. It says: “The gates are always open.” I told our graduates at commencement that the gates are, indeed, always open to them. I told our entering freshmen in convocation that the gates are open to opportunity and new ideas. I assure you that the gates will always be open to each of you. Thank you.