

James P. Bondz.

In the early 15th century, Sigismund of Luxembourg who was king of Hungary and later Emperor of Germany is reputed to have said "On any given day, I can create dozens of dukes and counts, ^{appoint scores of lords} dub hundred of knights, but only God can create a Scholar"

A scholar is a rare commodity, it was rare in the fifteenth century, it is rare even today -

To have advanced university degrees, in itself does not make a scholar, it usually helps, but is not a prerequisite.

A scholar is the end result of a long process of learning and of maturation. We refer to a person as a scholar if that individual has mastered a specific area of knowledge and is able to interpret that material in an intelligent, judicious and sensitive manner. Any hard working and dedicated individual can dig up information by persistent dedication. To analyze, organize and evaluate this material and to present it in a readable fashion is the work of a mature scholarly mind.

Scholars should, but do not always communicate their findings with other professionals or the intelligent general public, thus we often hear of the "Ivory tower" syndrome afflicting the researcher.

One of the ways to communicate the results of our research is to teach at a university. The ideal professor is the teacher-scholar who is able to involve his or her students into the magic world of scholarship.

The true professor is on the cutting edge of the profession, is familiar with the work being done in his or her field of expertise, knows the major interpretations, is familiar with the tools of research and has made a contribution to the growth of knowledge.

As I indicated to you, a scholar is a rare commodity, a great teacher-scholar is even rarer.

We at YSU have been fortunate and privileged to have in our midst a man who has in fact matured into a remarkably productive scholar, and is an outstanding teacher as well.

He is Dr. James P. Ronda, Professor of History, our speaker for this evening.

Dr. Ronda came to YSU in 1969 after completing his education at Hope College in Holland Michigan, and the Univ. of Nebraska at Lincoln where he earned his Ph.D. ~~in 1969.~~

In the academic world there are basically three occasions, when we gather to pay tribute to one of our own.

First, is obviously retirement parties, of which we have had four so far. These are always bitter-sweet occasions. We are saying farewell to dear and esteemed colleagues, who are leaving our profession to retire to spend their time in the loving company of their families as Agnes has done, or to publish like mad, as Morris is doing.

The second occasion is the eulogy for a departed member of the academic family, fortunately we have had only one in our department, where friends and associates praise the deceased, which might bring some solace to the bereaved family, but does not do a hell of a lot for the ego of the recipient of the accolades.

The third opportunity presents itself with the situation we face today, namely one of our dear friends is moving on to face new challenges, to master new possibilities. In a way this is closest to that other academic ritual, so well known and dreaded by all of us, namely commencement. Our friend Jim is in a way "commencing", facing a different life, new colleagues, diverse opportunities. — Do not be alarmed, I will not pretend to be a local industrialist or mall developer and

and will not insult your intelligence by telling you all the world's Jim Ronda has to conquer "out there".

Instead, we are gathered here today to recognize a dedicated scholar, a superb teacher and a very special companion, who has shared his life with us for 21 years. During this time Jim has been an inspiration to his peers, has set a standard which is hard to reach by those of us who are not Dutch Calvinists by birth.

If you look back on the twenty-one years you were among us Jim, you can be assured that you have indeed made a difference. You can leave YSU with the firm knowledge that because of you this place is better and richer, than it was when you came. You have been a success as defined by Ralph Waldo Emerson

That person is a success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; who has earned the appreciation of honest critics and endured the betrayal of false friends; who appreciates beauty and finds the best in others; who leaves the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; [who knows that even one life has breathed easier because he or she has lived]. This is to have succeeded.

These are not commencement clichés, these are the sentiments of your friends.

Let us, however, not get excessively sentimental on this occasion. After all, not every moment in the past was filled with scholarship, teaching and university service. There have been many lighter moments, and all of us have our favorite "Ronda Stories", which will be retold in the years to come whenever we ~~to~~ come together to talk or to lift a few glasses ^{in the} ~~of~~ spirits of comradeship.

I am deeply honored that you have asked Fred and me to say a few words on this occasion. It was also my privilege to introduce you at the Phi Kappa Phi Dinner last night.* I did feel, however, that my dear colleagues not on the program tonight, should also have the opportunity to express a few parting sentiments, ^{on stools} to you. Realizing that historians have a slight tendency toward verbosity, we felt that having each member of the department come up to this podium and say something brief, would extend this program past midnight. Instead I went to those I could corner and asked them to give me, in writing, in one sentence or possibly two, what they wished for you, as you embark on your journey.

Only one of our colleagues, Pei Huang, was able to restrain himself and did in fact write one sentence. This is remarkable and praiseworthy, but it also says something about the rest of us.

I

This is what our own Oriental sage, Pei has to say:

Confucius said: "Hear me, O Jim! Go west, go south, and come back to see your old friends. God bless you."

Hugh, who will say a few words later kept his wishes to two sentences:

"For twenty years you continued at Youngstown State University, daily guarding the parameters of teaching and research. The footprints you have made are forever with us."

Our next selection is by our departmental cartoonist Martin Berger,
entitled: EULOGY FOR JAMES P. RONDA *(and apparently theologian)*

Jim has spent two decades demonstrating that--contrary to our persistent complaints--it is possible to carry a 36-hour teaching load, ~~in~~ with essays, thorough preparation, and vigorous ^{classroom} presentation; to read colleagues' manuscripts; and nevertheless to produce research sufficient in quality and quantity to escape the aforesaid 36-hour load. It is possible if one is a hyperactive Calvinist who does not require sleep.

It is customary on occasions of leave-taking, ^{to say:} "He's going to a better place." For once we have reason to believe that it's true, a fate both predestined and earned by works.

Two members of the department who could not be with us tonight, left their messages for me to read.
Saul Friedman says:

Jim:

We will all miss the excellence and excitement you brought to the classroom. For all that you have done in upgrading library holdings, introducing our students to the wonders of microforms, mentoring and maintaining high standards for future historians, thank you. The university is much mistaken if it believes it can readily fill the void your departure creates in teaching and scholarship. I envy you your freedom and wish you every success at Tulsa.

Saul Friedman

Fred Viehe's Statement to Jim Ronda reads as follows:

Your move from Youngstown to Tulsa seriously calls into question your judgment as well as your national reputation. We all know that the Steel Valley is filled with the likes of Jim Traficant, Joey Naples and Organized Crime. But is a move to Tulsa, the center of the Oil Patch, reknown for Oral Roberts, Prayer Towers and Faith Healers really what you call a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity?" Is this progress? Is this improvement? Remember, Jim, at Tulsa, they're serious when they say "to pray for faculty improvement."

Now, Jim, we know you will do fine in Tulsa. But like all of us, you probably have your down moments--writer's block and such. Promise us this, Jim: under no circumstances will you mutter the words, "Lord, strike me down where I sit." Do not even think these words. For in Tulsa, according to Oral Roberts, the Lord tends to deliver.

III

To which Charles Darling adds:

Jim and I share some disgustingly good habits: Each of us listens to real American music--folk music that is. We both direct and superintend two of the outstanding railroads in the country--they are models of perfection. Any one with those habits can not be all bad! I wish him well as the good citizens of Tulsa learn more about, not only Lewis and Clark, but Woody Guthrie and the Santa Fe!

Charles

Sid Roberts remembers ^{vividly} the arrival of Jim on campus. ~~in~~ There was an intense young man, with mustache, cape, a western style hat and a large "Boycott Grapes" button on his lapel. This being 1969, Sid was convinced that the Revolution was indeed at hand.

As time passed, the Revolution did not materialize. Jim became the office mate of one of the most conservative members of our department, Dave Beechen.

In the eyes of Sid, Ronda has inherited or earned Dave's former honored title. Jim, according to Roberts is a "Christian Gentleman".

George Kulchyrkyj, who ^{IV} has mounted a serious challenge
to E. Hallam ^{portion} as the "Poet Laureate" of our Department
sends his good wishes in verse:

Tribute to a Departing Colleague!

Interesting hats,

Clandestine chats.

High pitched voices in Engineering--

Frightened eyes from notebooks peering,

Scribbling notes about expeditions,

Jesuits, Clark and other renditions.

"Misteria" - Mysterious--

They all emerge quite serious,

Pondering questions of paleography,

While deciphering notes on historiography.

Friends drinking tea from dainty glasses

During conferences after classes.

All this will cease as you depart

And enrich Tulsa with Herodotus' Art.

Best wishes

from

George Kulchyrkyj

From George's fellow traveler, Bill Jenkins

5-17-1970

To Jim Ronda from Bill Jenkins

THANK YOU FOR BEING A SOURCE OF SUSTENANCE AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING. WHAT I WISH FOR YOU IS CONTINUED SUCCESS AS A TEACHER, COLLEAGUE AND SCHOLAR, AND AN INCREASED ABILITY TO SAVOR YOUR MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Here are Lowell's incisive observations.

Lowell has noticed that Jim has had trouble dealing with the technology of the 20th century. Take, for example, the telephone. For years, Jim hid his in a box, so embarrassed was he of this instrument. Recently, the phone has emerged from the box. Or, ^{take} the case of writing implements. Jim early on accepted the pen, but that was as far as he would go. Finally, he accommodated ~~himself~~ himself to the typewriter (which is more than Domonkos ever did). The ~~shocking~~ greatest shock, however, is that Jim is now ~~even~~ entering the computer age with word processing.

I think, however, Jim is going to ~~go~~ a place where he will feel more comfortable, where he can indeed ~~where~~ ^{wear} his cowboy hat and get rid of his car--rumor has it that he has already ~~but~~ purchased a horse.

Lowell offers some friendly advice to Jim--it won't do any good, because it has been offered before and Jim is too devoted to the Protestant Work Ethic:

- Advice:
- 1) walk to your office when the phone rings.
 - 2) be late for class at least once a term.
 - 3) do something totally unplanned.

He is the author of 5 books, published by prestigious Presses, has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for his book on Lewis and Clark Among the Indians. He has written over 25 articles which have appeared in collections or scholarly journals. One of these Modern parapsychic academics, Professor Ronda has presented 36 papers at conferences and symposia "from sea to shining sea." What ^{more} can one say about a man whose curriculum vitae is 9 pages long.

The respect in which he is held by his students and colleagues is reflected by the fact that Dr. Ronda has been designated a Distinguished Professor by this university four times.

As you can see: God must have been in a particularly good form when he created James P. Ronda. He has been a dear friend, a delightful colleague for twenty-one years. It is therefore a great personal honor and privilege to introduce this unique man to you tonight. He is, as you know, leaving us for a prestigious endowed chair at the University of Tulsa.

His farewell to us is entitled

"Last Chances: Some Thoughts on Leaving Home."

My ^{own} "Ronda story" is brief. I was not involved in the hiring of Jim simply because, as you all know, medievalists know nothing of American history.

When Jim finally arrived, I was most pleasantly surprised. You see, "Ronda" in Hungarian means ugly, and I had expected this hideous looking guy. While Jim is not exactly Robert Redford, he is certainly not hideous. When subsequently I met his young wife Jeannie, I was certain that Ronda does not mean ugly. In fact, in Hungarian Jeannie Ronda would be an oxymoron.

These then are the stories, the wishes, sentiments of your friends. Keep them in your heart.

And finally this: In the marvelous, but historically not very accurate play-(movie) Amadeus there is a memorable scene where the composer Sallieri speaks about the musical genius of Mozart. There are, said Sallieri, a select few whose creative souls are touched by the very hand of God. — We obviously do not want to carry the parallels ^{between you and} ~~to~~ such a tragic figure as Mozart to any illogical conclusions. First of all, you are married to a level headed woman, not a flake such as Constanza Mozart. Second, you dear Jim, have already outlived Mozart by a dozen years. After all, he was just a sickly Austrian, while you are endowed with a robust Dutch physique.

What is true, however, is that you also have been touched in a special way by the hand of God. This is what makes you unique, and for us, irreplaceable.