

**Remarks of Craig W. Allin, Professor of Politics,  
on the Occasion of the Kresge Award Dinner  
Honoring Richard P. Small**

Elmcrest Country Club, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

October 27, 2000

John Wesley, the founder of Methodist Church, challenged his followers to, “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”

Dick Small has lived up to that charge to a degree that very few can match. It is altogether fitting and right that tonight, Cornell College and the United Methodist Church join together to honor a man—and a family—who have given so much of themselves for the benefit of others.

In June of 1889, the richest man in the world, published an essay on wealth in the *North American Review*, a magazine with a Cornell connection. The richest man in the world was Andrew Carnegie, and his steel company had made him the Bill Gates of the Industrial Revolution. The essay, later retitled “The Gospel of Wealth,” is Carnegie’s best known work. It was admired and anthologized, and I read it with great appreciation as an undergraduate at a small liberal arts college much like Cornell, but with more money.

Espousing the Social Darwinism of his epoch, Carnegie, proclaimed that unregulated Capitalism was the engine of progress and extremes of wealth the inevitable result. But Carnegie was different; he was truer to the spirit of Adam Smith.

I reread “The Gospel of Wealth” just this morning, for the first time in more than 30 years. To my adult sensibilities it seemed clear that Andrew Carnegie was no great philosopher, but such a realization does not diminish what he was. Carnegie was a business genius who thought serious thoughts, reached conclusions that rose above narrow self-interest, and acted on those conclusions.

Rather than lobbying for the abolition of inheritance taxes, so as to perpetuate class distinctions, he argued for their increase, so as to foster individual competition for capitalistic supremacy. Having acquired a vast personal fortune, he set about to give it away. In all, he gave away more \$6.8 billion (in today’s dollars) and established more than 2,000 libraries in communities across the country. One of them is on the Cornell College campus.

And he was not shy about giving advice to his peers. In one of the longest sentences I have ever read, he admonished the man of wealth, and I quote, “to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him, simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound, as a matter of duty, to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community -- the man of wealth thus becoming the mere agent

and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better, than they would or could do for themselves.”

In all the best ways, surely Dick Small is Cornell’s Andrew Carnegie, and we are deeply in his debt.

But there are some important differences that we might want to celebrate as well. Of course, I didn’t know Andrew Carnegie personally, but I have the impression he was pretty full of himself. Dick Small is not. Indeed, those of us in attendance at Dick’s honorary degree ceremony in King Chapel last September were privileged to hear from a man of humility, grace, self-deprecating wit, and great comic timing. He entertained us with vignettes from his life on the Hilltop and chided Dean Moore for failure, in the formal citation, to characterize him as an intellectual. But mostly Dick made a day that was quintessentially about him into an opportunity to praise others. He honored his classmate Campbell McConnell. He honored the faculty of his day and the faculty of today.

And I am pleased to report that the faculty of today were there to hear it. You know, the Dean generally has to dragoon members of the faculty to serve at honorary degree ceremonies. The faculty turned out—on a Saturday—for Dick Small’s honorary degree ceremony. They did so in recognition of the unprecedented contributions he has made to enriching lives of learning on the Hilltop, for students and faculty alike.

As benefactors, Dick and Norma are without peer in the history of the college. By comparison, the Cornell family, after whom the college is named, contributed next to nothing. And many of us in the faculty harbor visions of correcting this egregious injustice. You have to admit that it would be an impressive promotion in status to go from being “a **small** liberal arts college” to being “**The Small** Liberal Arts College.”

Among the many gifts the Smalls have given Cornell, the faculty are particularly blessed by the Richard and Norma Small Senior Faculty Chair, which directly supports our mission as teachers.

In “The American Teacher,” A. Bartlett Giamatti, former President of Yale University, has written, “Teachers believe they have a gift for giving; it drives them with the same irrepressible drive that drives others to create a work of art, or a market, or a building.” Alas, the value of the gift a teacher gives diminishes if the teacher is not renewed. It is our good fortune that the rotating chair created by the Smalls provides for just such renewal. It is not self-evident to those outside the profession, but great teachers need time away from teaching. This is especially true at colleges like Cornell where teaching easily becomes all consuming.

The Small Chair has allowed its recipients to pursue a wide variety of intellectual and research interests, and by so doing to renew and enhance their effectiveness as teachers. Beyond a certain time away from teaching, the Small Chair allowed me to pursue my research in environmental policy and public lands management. It contributed to my completion of a three volume *Encyclopedia of Environmental Issues* and funded my participation in a week-long conference on

Wilderness Science at the University of Montana. My successor in the Small Chair, Professor of Religion David Weddle, has used the resources of the Small Chair to make two major study trips to the Middle East and to launch a television program called “Ethical Perspectives on the News,” which is broadcast here in Cedar Rapids on KCRG-TV.

Those of you who know David Weddle know he has a gift for language. And regarding Dick and Norma Small, David has written, “Their gifts are given with open-handed grace and produce, not only refurbished buildings, but also informed minds, and widened hearts. They invest their fortune to cultivate wisdom, and for this rare and noble choice we rightly honor them. I shall always be honored to have occupied the faculty chair that bears their name.” In repeating David’s words tonight I mean to adopt them as my own.

Dick Small concluded his honorary degree speech with a little bumper sticker humor. I won’t repeat it, but it was political. That’s my field. Now bumper stickers about philanthropy are a little harder to find than bumper stickers about politics, but through painstaking research I was able to find just one. This one’s for you, Dick. Bumper Sticker: “When you do a good deed, get a receipt, just in case heaven is like the IRS.”

To that I would add one more observation—one short enough for a bumper sticker. It comes from the famed psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Menninger (Newsweek, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1959, for those of you who think I’m making this up). I quote the esteemed Dr. Menninger: “Generous people are rarely mentally ill.”

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Tonight’s Kresge Award acknowledges philanthropic greatness. I am honored to be a part of the festivities.

Dick and Norma Small, on behalf of the present and future faculty of Cornell College, thank you for every good gift.