

ARTS & SCIENCE PROGRAM 35th ANNIVERSARY TALK
DR. HERB JENKINS, 15 OCT. 2016, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

What follows is based in part on my remarks at the close of the 35th anniversary reunion of the Arts & Science Program. But I have taken the liberty to include things I really intended to say but didn't.

Good evening. I trust that you are enjoying a happy reunion.

With the exception of some of the olds gathered at the head table, and scattered thinly around the hall, most of you here tonight entered and completed the Arts & Science Program within the space of the 25 years since I retired (for the first time) from McMaster. Still, we are not strangers. We share some important things. We have earned the right to wear a shirt bearing the Arts & Science logo, which, although the logo may have been changed (body language conveys the speaker's shock) signifies the same miracle, an Arts & Science Program, unique on planet earth. Moreover, we are here tonight, you and I, for the same reason: to exchange stories with the friends we came to know in Arts & Science but may no longer see on a daily basis.

I would like to give my impressions of some of the good things that have happened to the Program in the hands of the directors who served after my retirement in 1991. I say "impressions" because I have not been very close to the Program. So, if I make egregious errors, please forgive.

Our present director, Jean Wilson, brings boundless energy, enthusiasm, and deep commitment to the Program. Through her outreach to other programs on this campus and to the Hamilton community, she has created new opportunities for learning. While doing all this she has continued to teach her excellent course on literature. And, to speak of the here and now, our thanks to Jean, Shelley, Rebecca, and to our lively undergraduate participants and entertainers, who have done so much to make this happy occasion possible.

Gary Warner brought insights to the first year Inquiry course from his wealth of experience as an advocate for social justice, both in the Hamilton community and internationally. His distinguished record of achievement has earned him an appointment to the Order of Canada.

Barbara Ferrier inspired excellence. She coordinated and taught in the first year Inquiry which for many years centered on Third-World Development. She was very good at it, as was Atif Kubursi, who I am sure many of you older hands will remember. I had the pleasure of working closely with Barbara, and Michael Ross, as editors and contributors to the book, "Combining Two Cultures," which is an account of the Program in its early days.

I spent some time in the last few days rereading parts of that book. I especially enjoyed revisiting the chapter entitled, The "Human Face of the Program." In it, five faculty and 27 students wrote reflections on their experience. A strong current runs through what they wrote. They express in one way or another their belief that together we have managed to create a space for collaborative learning in which faculty learn from students, students learn from faculty, and students learn from each other. I would have added that, remarkably, faculty members who are teaching in the Program also learn from each other.

I do not claim to understand how all this came about, but since I am something of an Inquiry nut, I like to think that Inquiry provides fertile ground in which collaborative learning can grow. In pursuing one's

own question--one that you do not yet have an answer to--your teachers, although they can provide some guidance, will not be able to hand down expert answers. Rather, teachers and students will be on the same side of an effort to formulate a central question the pursuit of which, one hopes, can throw new light on an important issue.

We live in a deeply troubled world. There are enormous challenges we might not be able to overcome. Among them are climate change, widespread environmental destruction, brutal civil wars, and more than 65 million refugees. Perhaps rational Inquiry has a part to play. I am more sure that this is a time when having good friends who share concerns as well as interests is especially important. I am grateful for the friends I made through the Arts & Science Program and I wager that you are as well.

Thank you.

Herb Jenkins
October 15, 2016