

Memorial for Ken Nottingham

May 28, 2008

Ken Nottingham was a friend and benefactor of Johns Hopkins. He was a student on the Homewood Campus in the 1950s, at a time when today's Krieger School was a men's college. He earned his degree in political science in 1959. That was the year the *Hullabaloo*, the Hopkins yearbook, could report that, at Memorial Stadium in Baltimore, the Colts beat the New York Giants in the NFL Championship, and that President Eisenhower, that is, Johns Hopkins President Milton Eisenhower, would leave the porch light on at Nichols House when it was OK for the students to drop in and say hello.

Ken's life of leadership was well launched as an undergrad. He was president of his fraternity, Delta Phi, where he was responsible for budget, finance, and social functions! How emblematic, don't you think? Ken taking care of business and making sure that there was time for him and others to have fun. I am told he did a fantastic job, was re-elected for a second term by his peers, and continues to be a trustee to the national organization. Ken was faithful to his relationships for the long term.

That was nearly a half century ago. Johns Hopkins has changed tremendously since then, but Ken's love of the school and enthusiasm for our mission never wavered. He did post-graduate studies at SAIS in 1965, when Lyndon Johnson was in the White House and the overwhelming focus of American foreign policy was the challenge of the Soviet Union. Ken later became an active member and supporter of the Johns Hopkins alumni association. He also served on the Advisory Council at SAIS, and was, I know, a great and special friend to George Packard.

In 2004 Ken joined the university's Board of Trustees, and became an important and very active member on the finance committee. He helped direct the development of the university's five-year financial plan, and was especially concerned with the crucial topics of capital projects and external financing. His commitment to this work was legendary; and friends at Homewood remember the time he came to a

meeting the day after having undergone foot surgery--hobbling a bit but determined to make his contribution.

As most of you know, Ken's career with AIG companies gave him first-hand and in-depth knowledge of Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Far East. Indeed, the majority of his career was spent overseas with Betsy at his side. He was simply the perfect adviser to our students and our school. It also meant that time with Ken, or dinner with Ken and Betsy, was always a treat. In my six years of knowing Ken I heard lots of grand stories—from Hawaii, Nigeria, Japan and beyond. He would tell the stories as any great storyteller does, with a sense of discovery and humor. But these stories also taught me about the world and about Ken and Betsy, who lived a life of adventure and brought their most admirable values with them even as they acclimated to places that were truly foreign in those days before internet, cell phones and connectedness the world over.

With Betsy at his side, and speaking of his children and grandchildren, Ken was a happy and generous man, and their home was one of great hospitality. One of my first memories as dean is learning that this very special couple, the Nottinghams, wanted to host a reception for me with alumni and friends at their beautiful home in Washington. It was a grand gesture and I have fond memories of that event.

Ken was a loyal recruiter at SAIS and got a big kick out of asking students how many in the audience planned to go into insurance. Invariably no hands would go up, a fact Ken loved to recount. Yet there has been a steady succession of SAIS alumni, adventurous internationalists, following Ken to AIG and ALICO.

Indeed, Ken would tell the story about how he and Betsy stumbled into the surprising choice of a career at AIG--the happy decision of a lifetime. Ken met Hank Greenberg as a young naval officer, when he had the duty of driving him to the airport after a Pentagon meeting. Ken was a young reservist assigned to a commission that dealt with a rice shipment program for Vietnam and Cambodia. As the government needed war risk insurance, there was also an insurance expert on the panel.....That was Hank

Greenberg, and the rest is history—but incomplete history since Hank and Ken would doubtless have shared new business challenges. None of us expected Ken to really retire, and Betsy would be at his side for some new chapter in the life of this very talented and generous gentleman, in every sense of the word.

By the way, it was Hank who sent Ken to Hong Kong, where Buck Freeman became his great mentor. The Greenbergs and the Freemans have been long-standing and generous supporters to SAIS, and as we honor the memory of Ken, we also embrace the broader AIG circle of friendship that has done so much to benefit the school.

I want the friends and family gathered here today to know how much Ken meant to us at SAIS. Ken and Betsy were not only amongst the most generous supporters of the school, Ken also participated in the life of the school and as a personal adviser to me. He served on our Advisory Council for 20 years and led the school's current capital campaign. But equally important he was the model partner to our Career Services colleagues, often traveling to campus to speak to students and recruiting summer interns and SAIS graduates for careers at ALICO and AIG. He knew that our highest fiduciary duty was to each and every student.

Let me conclude by sharing with you one highlight from a paper written by Lieutenant Commander of the U.S. Navy John Morris, who received a master's in international public policy [from SAIS] just last week. John interviewed Ken just this year and the topic was "Leaders and Leadership." Having spent half of his own military career working in some of the same countries where Ken had been a business leader, John wanted to dig deeper into how Ken managed cross-cultural leadership and he wrote that he "learned a great deal" which he plans to apply in his own future career. It is a wonderful write-up, which we have shared with Betsy. Here is the list of nine concepts that Ken shared on how to be a leader:

- First, you need to work harder than anyone else.

- Second, you need to bring added value to any task you take on.
- Third, you need to know what you are doing so others don't see their leader as incompetent.
- Fourth, you need to live a morally sound life.
- Fifth, take personal interest in the individuals and the families who work for you.
- Sixth, surround yourself with talented people and promote them.
- Seventh, delegate wherever possible so you can keep your eye on the strategic vision.
- Eighth, embrace and respect foreign cultures.
- Ninth, and I quote in full, "Be willing to take the hard jobs and expose yourself to 'danger,' be it physical (as in taking a job in an unsafe country), or a job that may be seen as too challenging to succeed. By succeeding or failing, it will help build character."

He might have added that, when great tragedy hits your own family, show incredible bravery as you carry on as a supporter of others asking undiminished effort from yourself!

As SAIS embarked on a new strategic plan last year, Ken volunteered to chair a committee on developing innovative financial aid solutions for students. Ken wanted young people to have the education and exposure to fulfill their potential. When he retired from AIG in 2006, unsolicited by us, his colleagues at ALICO chose to honor his tenure at the company by establishing a fellowship in his name at SAIS. I

remember remarking to my colleagues on how inspirational and selfless Ken must have been, to inspire his closest colleagues to give such a gift to honor his decades of leadership.

Ken Nottingham gave so much to Johns Hopkins over the course of 50 years. We honor that legacy today, and will always be deeply grateful for his time, his wisdom, and his real love for this university.

SAIS has lost a leader and I have lost a personal friend and adviser. On behalf of all my colleagues at the school, let me assure you all that his memories will be a blessing to us for many years to come.