

Modified Remarks delivered by Dr. Stephen Long '82

R-MC Macon Connections program

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

April 15, 2011

I thank each and every one of you for coming this morning. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has had trouble the last few months attracting huge crowds, despite the artists they choose to display, so I assured Alex that having me as the headliner this morning would get a room full of people to his museum. Compared to Picasso, artist I am not, but weird, my kids would say, I am.

Sincerely, though, it is indeed an incredibly humbling pleasure to accept this award and to have so many friends and family here. I think Georganne should actually get this award because she is the one who married Randolph-Macon thinking she was saying “I do” to Steve Long. Surprise sweetheart.

It's hard to believe that 34 years ago about this time of year I received (acceptance) letters from University of Richmond, Wake Forest, Hampden-Sydney and Randolph-Macon College.

But, this is perhaps the most significant letter that I received in response to these letters. *(Long read a letter of regret from Hampden-Sydney regarding his decision to attend Randolph-Macon College)*

Sorry to Whit, my son who is a junior in Tigerville (H-SC)—I couldn't resist.

And interestingly, it's amazing as I am going through the process of having to figure out how to pay two college tuitions and one private high school tuition for Whit, Mary Virginia and Margaret, that concerning the costs of a R-MC education in 1978 it doesn't seem today that what was to our family then “the investment of a lifetime—a R-MC education” was really all that costly.

I knew from the start that R-MC was the right place for me. I didn't want a large university where I was a number. I believed in the moment of connection before it was a term we even used. I understood "Macon Connections" before it was the reason we had these breakfasts. R-MC was for me, and continues to be the "right place, at the right time, for the right reasons."

I was guaranteed upon acceptance that I would get into medical school—I darn near broke the college record by not getting in, as evidenced by my freshman report card.

With a D and C- in freshman chemistry and a C in organic, I almost made them eat their words. But I had professors and administrators who believed in me and pushed me to believe in myself.

I encountered controversy and challenge. From the time I interviewed for the R-MC award scholarship, giving me 50% of my expenses toward tuition, I almost missed the interview on a Saturday morning because I was a bit over-served at my first KA fraternity party as a visiting high school student on the Friday night before the interview. But none-the-less I made it, and the rest, as they say is history. Oh, despite the fact that I answered scholarship committee chairman Dr. Baskin's very serious scholarship interview question, "Mr. Long what books do you like to read?", after a period of hung over contemplation with "Paperbacks, Dr. Baskin." His response, "Could you be more specific, Mr. Long? Precisely, what type of paperbacks?" Don't know what I said, but I got the cash! Politics 101 was beginning for me!

I think my parents and sister, who are here today with me, enjoyed my R-MC experience too. Certainly my mom did as evidenced by my rummaging through a box of hundreds of pages of Macon Memorabilia that she saved which shows, for instance:

"Steve-Randolph Macon 1st letter, 2nd Letter, 3rd Letter, etc."

Miss me or what mom??? Actually, I think she's just saving stuff to get even with me when I run for Governor.

As a student at Macon it was not all easy street in or out of the classroom. I encountered controversy—try shutting down the school newspaper when you're president of the Student Government and you'll understand the power of the media.

And of course, as most of you know, I learned how to be at ease with myself from the shy humble Shenandoah Valley boy to the shy humble doctor I am today, in terms of handling being in the spotlight of the media!!

And ultimately, Randolph-Macon did what it was intended to do, it got me into medical school and prepared me to adapt to a challenging and changing world. Former President Ladell Payne wrote a letter on my behalf to the Dean of the MCV, "Steve may not win the Nobel Prize in Medicine but he will be the most Noble President the American Medical Association has ever had." And finally, it happened I was accepted, albeit with a humbling 4 month wait.

In Sum, R-MC has taught me to give back to the community, to my family, to my patients and to my alma mater.

I think I can conclude what R-MC means to me as I've served on fraternity committees, advisory boards, been involved with the alumni association, participated in student recruitment, served on the board of associates, having pre-med students shadow me, travelled to athletic games and championships, watched plays and lectures, and finally, the highest honor an alumnus can be asked to do, serve on one's Board of Trustees. I think it can be summed up that R-MC taught me to do what the movie by the same title from several years ago admonished, "Pay it Forward."

For approaching 185 years, we have been a blessed and unique group of constituents and believers at Randolph-Macon. I predict that after this capital campaign we will be poised for the next century of service.

Thank you, Pay it Forward and "Believe in the Moment of Connection"