

“A Transformative Leader of Wisdom, Dignity, and Courage:
In Honor and Memory of Myles Brand”

Tribute to Myles Brand, 16th President of Indiana University

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

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Conseco Fieldhouse

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We gather today to mourn the grievous loss of Myles Brand and to remember the remarkable accomplishments of a unique man, whom many of us were privileged to call a friend. Our hearts go out to Myles' wife of 31 years Peg, to his son Josh, Josh's wife Cheryl, and their children Megan and Cassidy. Myles and Peg's closeness as a couple was apparent to everyone, and her constant love and affection for him I know brought comfort to him in his last days. He mentioned it to me every time I saw him after he became ill.

Myles Brand was the 16th President of Indiana University and served from 1994 to 2002. He arrived at IU after a distinguished career, including at the University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Arizona, Ohio State, and finally as president of the University of Oregon.

He was, put quite simply, one of Indiana University's greatest presidents. The impact he had was enormous. It was transformative and it was visionary. Many of the major directions that the university pursues today, from the life sciences and information technology, to endowed chairs, to diversity and inclusiveness, bear his vision for IU as a great institution and his deep understanding of, and commitment to, the values of higher education at their very best.

There is no more fitting way, then, for Indiana University to remember Myles Brand than through an endowed chair in his name.

Hence, I am announcing today that the university is establishing a permanent Myles Brand Chair in Cancer Research at the IU School of Medicine, Indianapolis. Funding for the chair will support a world-class biomedical researcher scientist, with expertise in pancreatic and other gastrointestinal cancers.

During the final months of his life, Myles—at the urging of his friends—made the decision to lend his name to raise funds to support cancer research at IU. Support for the Brand Chair thus far includes nearly 145 individual gifts and pledges totaling more than \$1.1 million. IU will be adding a further \$1 million match to the endowment.

I had the honor, along with many others here, of helping Myles bring his vision for IU to fruition. But very little of it could have happened without him. It was one of the great honors of my life when he chose me as one of his vice presidents. We warmed to each other almost immediately when we first met in 1996 when he interviewed me. Then— from when I began work at IU in January 1997— I saw him regularly, quite often weekly, sometimes daily. I had the enormous privilege of working for Myles for the next six years, and, though I have worked for some fine men, I have never worked for anyone better than Myles Brand.

He was an outstanding president and a truly great man of dignity and grace. I was honored that after he left IU, he remained a staunch friend. And when I became one of his successors as president of Indiana University, he gave me freely of his time, advice and matchless experience.

As a leader he had a remarkable ability to inspire confidence. When I presented him with an IU honorary doctorate earlier this year, I said that it could truly be said of

him, as it was of the great British Prime Minister Pitt the Elder, “No one left his presence who did not feel the braver.”

Controversy swirled around him in the later stages of his life. But what do these controversies matter when one considers his legacy at IU:

- students and faculty with access to the best technology in America;
- life sciences researchers with access to the superb facilities who may one day find a cure for some form of cancer;
- the promising young professor in an endowed chair Myles helped create, maybe the next to win a Nobel Prize at IU;
- and the low income minority student able to get access to an IU education without debt?

And even more broadly through his enormous impact and legacy at the NCAA, what do these controversies matter when one considers:

- student athletes encouraged and supported in receiving an excellent education so their futures are secure when their playing days are over;
- the talented African-American coach encouraged to aspire to the peak of his or her profession;
- and athletics, a proper part of a university and not a separate world apart?

All of this, and far, far more than I can recount here, was championed and made possible by Myles Brand.

Most of us here knew Myles as a courageous and visionary colleague and a warm and loyal friend.

But Myles was also a philosopher of penetrating power, deep and subtle insight, and boundless creativity. He was renown for his work in action theory, and the eminent philosopher Keith Lehrer said of Myles’ celebrated book in this area, that it “remains the central work” in the field.

More generally, in philosophical matters metaphysical and moral, Myles was a Platonist. That is, he believed as did the great Greek philosopher Plato twenty-five centuries ago, that concepts like truth, justice and beauty were not ephemeral and ever changing, were not “relative,” but represented eternal unchanging verities.

In his great philosophical dialog “The Phaedo,” Plato paints an unforgettable portrait, that is described by Phaedo, of Socrates in his jail cell awaiting execution but philosophizing with his friends right up until the last moment.

And so it was with Myles Brand. Heroically, doggedly, courageously, indefatigably, he worked, thought, and philosophized almost until the end.

And when his end came, when that brilliant mind, that courageous spirit, that friend, husband, father and grandfather of boundless love and affection was finally no more, Phaedo’s final words on the death of Socrates capture the full measure of this tragic loss.

“Such was the end,” said Phaedo, “of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all the men whom I have ever known.”

Thank you.