

“Celebrating Cook Hall and the People Our Players Become”

Dedication of Cook Hall

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

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Cook Hall

Indiana University Bloomington

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over a half century ago, legendary IU coach Branch McCracken wrote that “[a]lmost no other field of our school curriculum demonstrates good or poor teaching better than does athletics. It would be very interesting if other instructors had to demonstrate the results of their teaching before fifteen or twenty thousand critics each week for three months each year, especially if each critic considered himself an authority on the subject demonstrated. I imagine several professors would turn gray in a hurry and develop ulcers, too.”¹

Of course, the highly public nature of student-athletes’ performance depends on hours and hours of practice behind every game.

Today, as we dedicate this magnificent new facility, we recognize the vital importance of that preparation, the character it instills, and the strength of the partnerships it builds.

¹ McCracken, Branch. *Indiana Basketball*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1955. Page 4.

2. HISTORY OF BASKETBALL FACILITIES

As a university, we have been preparing for this facility since our basketball team was first formed in 1898. Just two years prior, IU's first Assembly Hall, located directly east of Owen Hall, was dedicated by the university's ninth president Joseph Swain. This was a vast improvement on earlier facilities, which included a cellar and a barn in which women and men—separately, of course—did what President Swain called “the legitimate work of physical training.”²

Our first men's game took place in 1900 against Butler. Unfortunately, we lost.

In 1971, the building we now know as Assembly Hall was dedicated by IU President John Ryan, who is with us today. On December 1st of that year, Hoosier men inaugurated the court with an 84-77 win against Ball State.

This is part of the great history upon which this beautiful new basketball development facility builds.

3. PRACTICE ON AND OFF THE COURT

As we all know, the practice that will take place in this building is part of a larger concern for every student-athlete. Every coach is first and foremost a teacher, and every player, first and foremost a student. In 1985, Janos Starker reiterated this point when he was invited to speak to the men's basketball team. Of that visit Professor Starker said, “There is no question that people who succeed in any field, sport or art, will only succeed if they have taken care of training their brain.”³

² “The Event of the Season.” *Bloomington World* 19 Dec. 1896. Page 4.

³ Sulek, Robert Paul. *Hoosier Honor: Bob Knight and academic Success at Indiana University*. New York: Praeger, 1990. Page 16.

Such training is at the heart of the very best liberal education, an education in the breadth of human knowledge, from the sciences to the humanities, from the social sciences to the arts, and instruction in the skills of both analysis and discrimination.

As the great philosopher of higher education John Henry Cardinal Newman wrote over a century ago, this is a training that develops “habits of mind which last through life.”⁴

Such training requires discipline and time. It requires dedication and skill. And it also requires the strength of many forms of partnership.

4. THE DIFFERENCE GENEROSITY CAN MAKE

As we have seen this building become a reality, one of the strongest of those partnerships has been between the university and the broader community, which has supported this project so generously. Throughout this facility we can see countless signs of this generosity from the Gray Entry Plaza to Pfau-Shine Legacy Court; from the Rush Men’s Basketball Court to the Olcott Women’s Basketball Players Lounge; from the Hilbert Office Suite to the Tobias Locker Room.

I could continue, but let me just say we are thankful to everyone who has made this wonderful facility a reality.

In particular, on behalf of the entire university community I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Bill and Gayle Cook, who have long been partners with Indiana University. Gayle, of course, graduated from IU in 1956. But beginning in 1963, she and Bill built on that already deep connection. Soon after forming their corporation on July 5th of that year, and working out of their Bart Villa apartment on Second Street, the Cooks partnered with researchers at the IU School of Medicine to develop better, more effective products.

⁴ Newman, John Henry. *The Idea of a University*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1891. Page 101.

Over the course of nearly a half-century, their vision and support have expanded opportunities well beyond the School of Medicine to the Jacobs School of Music, the School of Education, the Wells Scholars Program, and of course IU Athletics. It is a testimony to the Cooks' generosity of spirit that they insisted that the name of every Cook employee be included in the very large plaque that will be featured in the building's lobby near the elevators.

With that spirit, they have joined the ranks of only a few families in the history of IU—families such as the Lillys and Krannerts—who have left an indelible mark on Indiana University with their great vision and generosity, and for that we are deeply and profoundly grateful.

Would you please join me, then, in once again thanking Bill and Gayle Cook and their son Carl?

5. THANKS TO LEADERSHIP

Every project like this requires a great team that collaborates on the many details that ultimately come together to make a facility like this as functional and beautiful as this one is. Would you please join me in thanking IU Vice President and Athletics Director Fred Glass for his leadership on this project? Fred has worked closely first with former Vice President Terry Clapacs and then with Vice President Tom Morrison as well as the IU Architect's Office and members of the basketball coaching staff to refine the vision for this project as it has neared completion. Let me extend my thanks to all of you for your efforts to make this ambitious vision a reality.

6. CONCLUSION: VISION AND A VIEW

By way of conclusion, let me turn to Margaret Graham, a pioneer of modern dance, who once said, “Practice means to perform, over and over again in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire.”⁵

Vision, faith, and desire may be the most apt way to describe the elements that have generated and will continue to infuse this remarkable new facility.

We can see these elements as we are reminded of the great history and traditions of IU Athletics in Legacy Court: our Big Ten champions and our national champions; our outstanding student-athletes who have brought both honor and victory to their alma mater on the court and in the classroom; and our many coaches and assistant coaches, who have worked to instill players with integrity and character.

We can see these elements here on the court itself, which will soon be resounding with the great efforts of our student-athletes.

But if you walk past the men’s and women’s courts and take a second turn, you will find Coach Crean’s and Coach Jack’s offices, both of which have windows. There, desire, faith, vision—and a view—coalesce.

But it is back on the court that we all will see the fruits of the labor that takes place in this facility. As we cheer on the Hoosiers, we should once again recall Coach McCracken’s words. “It’s quite a job, this coaching,” he said, “full of headaches, criticisms, disappointments, success, and some glory. . . . [C]oach[es are] paid not in money or winning teams, but in the [people their] players become.”⁶

⁵ Graham, Martha. “An Athlete of God.” *This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*. Eds. Jay Allison and Dan Gediman. New York: Holt, 2007. Page 84.
<<http://books.google.com/>>

⁶ McCracken, page 15.

Today we have seen the people those players become, and we have good reason to continue cheering.

Thank you very much.