

[988 words / 6.8 mins plus presentation]

Celebration of the Life of Patrick O'Meara
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
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Presidents Hall
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All of our speakers today have spoken eloquently about Patrick O'Meara in all his manifest sparkling facets – scholar, administrator, diplomat, and a truly wonderful and unforgettable human being.

I commented in detail on all of these when Patrick's passing was sadly announced in March and always did so at the annual O'Meara lecture where I would introduce it by summarizing Patrick's illustrious career.

So I will not repeat much of what I have said before or what others have said today. Instead I will simply restrict myself to some brief personal reflections and comments.

Patrick was a brilliant, decent, honorable, loyal, and urbane colleague, and he was also my friend. He was one of the very first senior administrators at IU who I got to know outside of IT when I first arrived here in January of 1997. In fact, Patrick was one of the guests at the first dinner party that my late first wife Andrea and I held at our new home a few months after we arrived.

Patrick was immensely kind. I remember that he knew we had two small children, then aged 5 and 6, and he give them a wonderful children's book "One Red Dot". I found it recently and gave it to my oldest daughter Josephine, who worked for Patrick for a time and also revered him, to give to her one year old. I thought this a fitting way to keep Patrick's memory alive.

We got on well immediately. Probably it had something to do with the fact that we were both immigrants and former subjects of the Queen. It certainly wasn't sport. A deep connection between our home countries of Australia and South Africa, are the great sports of rugby and cricket. But Patrick loathed them – as he did all sports, and looked at me disdainfully the first time I mentioned them.

Both of us had also worked extensively internationally and we were united in the view that international engagement was essential to as a great research university. Over the 10 years before I became president and in my various other roles, we stayed closely in touch and worked together in a number of areas. In fact, my first international trip at IU was with Patrick and Myles Brand in 1997 and I will talk about this a little later.

During this time I developed great respect for Patrick's work in enhancing and expanding the university's international engagement, and in particular for his consummate diplomatic skills and his mastery of the complicated protocol matters involved in dealing with international issues and international visitors and delegations.

But this reflects a deeper point I want to make. In the 20 years from when President John Ryan retired to 2007 when I appointed Patrick as IU's first VP for International Affairs, Patrick really was the driving force and continuity behind IU's international engagement at the institutional level as well as being IU's face to the international higher education and alumni community.

The tenure of my predecessors during this period was either not long enough or beset with major domestic issues and problems, and this did not allow them to focus on international engagement matters as much as they would have liked.

So it was Patrick and his superb staff, many of whom are here today, as well as many in the more internationally focused schools, who ensured over this period, the continuity of IU's great tradition and enterprise of international engagement. But it was Patrick who gave it its coherence. Many of the areas where we now lead the nation or where we

have important strategic commitments, for example study abroad, international students, and international institutional partnerships, continued to grow under Patrick's leadership.

Thus when in 2007 the university, at the strong urging of the then IU Board of Trustees, in particular then Trustees Pat Shoulders and Tom Reilly, turned to giving international engagement an expanded and higher profile place at the center of IU affairs, Patrick was the obvious and logical person to who we turned to become IU's first Vice President for International Affairs.

He performed with great distinction in this role and you have heard much from others today, and from me previously, about Patrick's outstanding service in it. An international strategic plan was developed, international institutional relationships prioritized and rejuvenated, study abroad was made a central part of an IU student experience and supported and enhanced with special fundraising, and international alumni chapters were formed or re-energized.

In support of all these goals, over the next 5 years Patrick and I (along with some others in this room) travelled to China, Germany, Korea, Qatar, Switzerland, the UAE and the United Kingdom.

And of course, Patrick was a great supporter of, and assisted in the establishment of, what rapidly became the now well respected Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, in which Patrick was a faculty member and in whose magnificent building, he had his last office.

His was a genuinely great university citizen and one of the great figures in its recent history. Indiana University is universally regarded as one of the nation's most internationally engaged universities and a leader in all the areas that support this. He will be remembered as one of the true fathers of this achievement, and is owed an

enormous debt of gratitude by all who value the vital role that universities play in international education and international engagement.

That concludes what I might call the serious part of my remarks. In what follows I will be making some less serious comments. Less serious because those of us who knew Patrick well will always remember that Patrick was quite simply fun – fun to be with and fun to travel the world with. So in ending this commemoration of the life of Patrick O'Meara, I want to focus on the “fun side” of Patrick. I believe he would have wanted it that way.

[A PowerPoint presentation follows]