

# Investiture Address

*by President Jerome A. Gilbert, Marshall University*

September 22, 2016

Good morning. I truly appreciate all of the greetings from distinguished guests and the hosting of the ceremony by Mr. Bernie Coston. I want to thank Commissioner Paul Hill for officially installing me as the 37<sup>th</sup> president of Marshall, and I thank Governor Tomblin for taking time out of his busy schedule to come to Marshall and for his support of higher education in West Virginia.

I extend my thanks and greetings to Secretary Kay Goodwin and to representatives of our congressional delegation and elected officials, to Commissioner Judy McCloud of Conference USA, and to all the representatives from the other universities.

In fact, I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who is here today: alumni, staff, students, faculty, friends, family, and supporters. I am humbled by your presence. It is particularly heartwarming to see so many faculty.

I am honored to have representatives of my family and my wife's family here with me today. Family is very special to us. In my speeches this past semester, I have talked about the Marshall family and now to have my own family here to join the Marshall family is indeed very special. I think all the Gilberts and the Smiths on my wife's side can all say with confidence and pride that "We are ... Marshall."

I am especially pleased that my mother Elizabeth is here today. She has been an inspiration to all of the Gilberts and her family, the Andersons. She will be 5 years short of a 100 in a few days. We have been blessed with her long life. Of course my wife Leigh is here. As many of you know, she left me to go solo for 5 months but is now delighted to be in our new hometown of Huntington.

My children are here and my daughter-in-law and granddaughter. My brother and sister and my brother-in-law, as well as other family members. I can tell you that I am very proud of all of them. The members of my family have always been supportive of me and I am privileged to have been blessed with them. I thank them all for their love, guidance, and support throughout my whole life.

Lots of people along my path have made an impact on the trajectory of my life and my career. I am grateful for their support, mentorship, and encouragement over the years.

You just heard from Bill Fox who knew me my first year as a freshman at Mississippi State University, 43 years ago. With perhaps the exception of the 12 years I was in North Carolina, he has kept up with me and communicated with me on a regular basis, up to the present day.

Fellow graduate students from Biomedical Engineering at Duke in the late 1970's are here. We were pilgrims together on the path to the graduate degree. They are like family to me.

There are others from Mississippi State who have traveled to be with us and I thank them for their being here today. It is very

special that they made the journey to be here today. They are my colleagues and my friends.

My special thanks to President Mark Keenum of Mississippi State who chose me to be his provost and mentored me in many ways. I have great admiration for President Keenum. As I do things right in my Presidency, you can give a lot of credit to Mark Keenum. He was a great teacher and leader.

I also should mention former President of Mississippi State, General Doc Foglesong who preceded President Keenum. As you may know, he is from Williamson, West Virginia. He is well known in these parts, and he was supportive of me being at Marshall and being a part of his home state.

I am honored to stand before you as the 37<sup>th</sup> President of Marshall University and humbled by this occasion. It is not so much an occasion for me but for the office of the president of Marshall. I am appreciative to the Board of Governors for having faith in me.

As stated by Gary White, I follow a difficult period in which the university unexpectedly lost its former President Steve Kopp. I am committed to carrying on the tradition of striving for excellence that Steve Kopp established in his tenure and that was continued by Interim President Gary White. Gary and his wife Jo Ann have been very supportive of me and Leigh and we will always be appreciative of their support and cherish their friendship. I told someone recently that it is like I have known Gary all of my life. That's just the sort of person he is.

Today is a special day because it is two days before the 261<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the birth of John Marshall. I requested that this ceremony be held as close as possible to the birthday of the Chief Justice because I think the legacy of John Marshall is significant and I want the university associated with him to be better known for carrying on the tradition of excellence he established. I have a profound respect and fondness for the namesake of this university. And symbolically I wanted this event to honor his name along with the university.

I had the great privilege to spend a day in Richmond this summer to pay tribute, in my own way, to John Marshall. I visited with the John Marshall Foundation which has as its mission the preservation of the memory and legacy of John Marshall. I am delighted to have representatives of the John Marshall society here today. I know Executive Director David King may be here, perhaps Reverend Caroline Smith Parkinson, the President of the Foundation. They and others will be glad to know that we will be having a quoits tournament tomorrow on campus as we do every year in recognition of the Chief Justice's birthday and to pay homage to his favorite game of skill.

We know that John Marshall greatly valued education but we have little that he wrote on that subject, probably because he spent most of his time writing about the law. A letter John Marshall wrote to his grandson just seven months before his death was pointed out to me by John Marshall Foundation member Kevin Walsh who is a law professor at the University of Richmond. -- I am grateful to Kevin for that. -- John Marshall tells

his grandson his views on the importance of the classics, the study of history, and the study of composition or writing. He particularly points out the importance of studying the history of one's own country .... and I agree.

But in reference to his grandson's essays which he received from his grandson in a previous correspondence, John Marshall reflects on the human condition and the pursuit of happiness which notably Jefferson enshrined in the Declaration of Independence as one of our inalienable rights.

Marshall writes: "Happiness is pursued by all; though too many mistake the road by which the greatest good is to be successfully followed. Its abode is not always in the palace or the cottage. Its residence is the human heart and its inseparable companion is a quiet conscience."

Marshall is saying that happiness does not necessarily come from possessing material goods but is about living a full life and a life of integrity where your conscience is free of any guilt.

It reminds me that the goal of a true education is what Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to as "intelligence plus character."

Education is not just about learning facts, it is also about learning how to live an honorable life and to function productively in society. It is also about development of character.

I think John Marshall would be very proud to have Marshall University named after him. He would be proud because at Marshall we strive not just to develop a student intellectually but

also concentrate on the social, professional, and ethical development of the prospective graduate.

I tell our freshmen at Orientation that we want to see them mature in many ways so that they are prepared to be our country's next leaders. A good bit of what they hear is "in the moment" and perhaps some of it sinks in. I tell the freshmen that we will be providing them experiences inside and outside of the classroom to help them prepare for life.

I think my reference to freshmen is appropriate today because the investiture of a new President is much like the start of the school year in the fall when a new set of freshmen arrives. It is a time of new beginning, renewal, and excitement. There are lots of expectations for what the future brings. It is written that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. This is the time for renewal and beginning and as such I want to talk a bit about Marshall, past and future.

The history of Marshall is rich and so too will be the future. John Laidley, prominent Virginia lawyer, helped found Marshall as Marshall Academy. It was founded on the western edge of Virginia in 1837 in the area around Maple Grove by the residents of Guyandotte. Maple Grove was where the Mount Hebron Church was located. The site on which we are standing was, of course, still Virginia in 1837. John Marshall died before Marshall University was formed and before West Virginia even existed. I think John Marshall would be pleased that West Virginia is a separate state formed by Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War, just

as I think he would be extremely honored to have Marshall University named after him.

Marshall experienced a long period of time as a normal school and also as a liberal arts college. Gradually over time and more rapidly in recent years, Marshall took on new facets that rounded out its offerings in the engineering and technical fields, the medical profession, the business arena, and other fields. Marshall has become a comprehensive Master's level institution and is on its way to adding doctoral programs with a chance of becoming a doctoral institution.

As I said in an op-ed piece this spring in the local newspaper, none of this expanded focus takes away from the strength of the liberal arts emphasis that continues to be a part of the general education content that is part of every student's undergraduate experience. Having a broad-based education with a liberal arts core is important as we educate students to become leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I am convinced that the future of Marshall will be a bright one, despite all of the challenges presented. In fact, I think that Marshall will prevail and grow into a leading university, stronger and more competitive by every measure.

Before entering office in 1980, President Ronald Reagan invoked the notion of America being a city on a hill. It was of course an idea originally expressed by the Puritan John Winthrop in a sermon written in 1630. It was a beautiful vision because everyone can picture that with your mind's eye: bright, shining, and a powerful sight.

I think that metaphor can be borrowed and applied to Huntington and Marshall, because from the surface of the Ohio River, as riverboat captains sailed along and dubbed Huntington the Jewel City, Huntington appears to be a city on a hill.

I think in the future, eyes will be focused on Marshall University and its twin of Huntington. Just as great things were anticipated by Winthrop for the future country of America, many hopes are pinned on Marshall. It is my goal not to disappoint those who are dreaming of future greatness.

I want to see Marshall grow in size and quality over the near future. I have set a goal of between 18,000 and 20,000 in the next 10 years and I think it could happen with the help of everyone.

As we grow new students, we will need to continue to find ways to increase our retention and graduation rates. Every student who enters Marshall needs to believe in his or her heart of hearts that they are going to be a college graduate and that Marshall will be there to assist in the process.

We will need to expand our messaging and we will be seeking ways to better tell the Marshall story about our excellent faculty, students, and staff. A regional and national marketing plan can do just that if we strategically develop our story to put the Marshall community in its best light.

We will need to seek new sources of revenue both by becoming more efficient and by finding new revenue streams. Fund raising will be obviously important. Increased research funding will also



be of critical importance as we move toward expanding our knowledge creation and dissemination of information.

We will need to increase our faculty and staff salaries so that we can not only attract but also keep outstanding individuals.

We will also need to engage our community and think more about helping with economic stimulation of the economy of West Virginia.

There are many changes on the horizon for higher education and of course that will include Marshall. The changing demographics are going to change the face of higher education and it will be more diverse and a mix of many cultures. This makes it even more important to have in place programs that address acceptance and respect.

And since I have touched on the subject of respect, there needs to be more awareness that we will not tolerate abuse against women in any form. I have a zero tolerance for improper sexual behavior, and we will have that message broadcasted loud and clear at Marshall. I hasten to add that it is not always possible to act at the speed that some would like but we will be fair and prudent in dealing with such cases on the Marshall campus and do our best to make sure that the truth prevails.

Other changes that will come to higher education will include more opportunities and sources of on-line course instruction. This will manifest itself in more on-line classes and more hybrid classes where there is a combination of face-to-face instruction and on-line material. I hope that we can develop more degree

programs, particularly at the graduate level, where students can attain a degree at a distance.

There will also be an increased desire to have additional out-of-class educational experiences for students. These activities prepare our students for real life and give us leaders who are ready to advance quickly to dealing with society's challenges.

Finally there is the issue of access and how to keep college affordable so it does not return to being just the realm of aristocrats as it was in the era of John Marshall. We can thank Justin Morrill and the Land Grant Act for changing higher education and opening its doors to the sons and daughters of the working class. We also need to educate our students about not taking on unnecessary loans and building a student debt burden that will follow them throughout their adulthood.

As we think about changes to the institution of higher education, it is important to think also about what we can do to make sure that our graduates are best prepared for the future, a future that will be unpredictable in terms of its advances and complexities. As I alluded to earlier, it is our responsibility to consider educating the whole person, the whole student. I want our students to leave Marshall with much more than just an excellent experience in the classroom.

I want our graduates to leave with co-curricular, out-of-classroom experiences that will have molded them into exceptionally prepared citizens of the world. Such things as internships, cooperative education, leadership opportunities in student government, study abroad, and service learning. We need

creative leaders who will develop unique and entrepreneurial ideas that will help us meet the grand challenges of this century. After all, we are in a world of ever increasing complexity and interconnectedness with a growing population that will stretch the current limits of resources.

In thinking of Marshall graduates being prepared as leaders for the future, I found inspiration in the Marshall Creed which is in the Student Handbook of Marshall. I have featured that Creed in various speeches and in an editorial I wrote in Huntington's Herald Dispatch over the summer. The Creed draws its foundation from the character of John Marshall. I want Marshall University to be known as a challenging university with high standards—high standards of academic rigor and high standards of conduct. I want Marshall to reflect the good and admirable qualities of Chief Justice John Marshall, as reflected in the Marshall Creed.

I invoked that Creed in the spring semester when releasing a statement about free speech and some political messages that were chalked on the university's sidewalks. John Marshall stood for protecting individual rights and for interpreting the U.S. Constitution so everyone could benefit from the rights and privileges outlined in it. He stood for justice and respect.

The Creed lists a number of statements that define the Marshall community. It says that we are an educational community, an open community, a civil community, a responsible community, a well community, an ethical community, a pluralistic community, a socially conscious community, and a judicious community. These

are characteristics that we can be proud of as an institution of higher learning.

In closing, I want to build on the Marshall Creed and express some aspirational traits and characteristics that we would want repeated and affirmed by all of our graduates, the sons and daughters of Marshall.

Listen as I describe who we want to be:

We are seekers of truth, not people who tolerate lies and injustice.

We are lifetime learners, not complacent graduates.

We are readers and thinkers, not blind followers of rhetoric.

We embrace the light; we are not ones who hide in darkness.

We turn the cheek; we don't return violence.

We surround ourselves with diversity; we don't shut out people because they are different.

We help find solutions; we don't contribute to problems.

We are defenders of justice, not ones who shrink from challenges.

We speak up for those without voices; we are not ones who sit in silence.

We share what we have; we do not hold greedily on to what is ours.

We love knowledge; we are not afraid of new ideas.

We look to the future with hope; we do not dread the worst.

We know we will succeed; we are not fearful of failing.

We are destined for greatness. We are the sons and daughters of Marshall.

I am honored to have been installed as your 37<sup>th</sup> President. Thank you for your attendance and thank you for your support.

XXX