Thank you for those kind words and the opportunity and honor to be present at this significant occasion.

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Though we are in the same room this afternoon – we are really all products of complex and varied stories, containing characters and occasions that are far, far stranger than fiction

As has been said, truth is always stranger than fiction because fiction is limited by the plausible - and truth certainly is not – I believe said by our own Mark Twain.

I am a product of such an implausible story, here only because my parents chose to flee from Estonia and the ravages of Communism during the Second World War - and then survived the displaced persons camps in Germany, waiting for the chance to come to America.

And we did come - in 1949 - my father, mother, grandmother and I, without any of us knowing a single word of English, nor having a single coin; - and yet we were exceedingly glad to come and begin again as Americans.

I remember distinctly my father viewing the coins of America, for the first time, and seeing that they were made of pure silver, and they were pure silver in 1949, and he said: “We have come to the right country.”

Besides offering to you and yours the well deserved congratulations of this moment ---- I wish to also offer to you my thoughts based on how I have come to view my own passage with its particular cast of characters ---- Hopefully these observations will resonate with those of you who are already conscious of life’s adventure. 

If you wish to see the finest of modern Architecture in the United States, visit the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, the Kimball Museum in Fort Worth, Texas or the Exeter Library at Exeter, New Hampshire. They were all conceived by Architect Louis I Kahn and they are sprinkled like jewels across our country. One of them should be within reach of all of you.

I was fortunate enough to study with this great architect and I wish to also share some of his thoughts, as I have come to understand them, and as I have validated them by my own experience.

Mr. Kahn, as I always called him, stated that one could think of life as being composed - composed – how he loved that word – composed of four great desires that we all share and hold in common.

In fact they make our commonness – our ability to say “What a beautiful day it is today” to each other or to have occasions like this one today.

In no particular order they are –

First – the desire to learn – this is what we are celebrating tonight – our insatiable desire to seek out the order of things, to satisfy our curiosity, the Hubble circling the earth - the probes in space to Mars, with Kebler 22 on the horizon – it is the source of all the great libraries and universities of the world - all from the desire to learn.
Many of you have already extended the boundaries of the known and will extend them again and again – perhaps finding some neutrinos that are speeding too fast or the possibility of cold fusion and clean energy without end.

**Second** – the desire to meet – the origin of all the great squares and plazas on the earth, the coffeehouses, the clubs, and all the planes full of individuals drinking orange juice at 36,000 feet, --- from the old version of pen on paper, two facing chairs in the study, the whispers at a dance - to the modern version of twittering, Facebook, Skype, and even Poly Com. - all from the desire to meet, to converse, to have friends and seek companions - for we are social beings and need others to become complete.

**Third** – the desire to express – to use our learning, to create a story, to construct a place, to dance on stage, - from composing music to guiding planes, - the downhill run, the windsurfers turn - all to express our skill, to use our knowledge, -- to heal, to teach, to read a poem and hear it resonate across the audience – all from the desire to express. Far more than work, it is work ennobled; the leaving behind of the track of our passage, a residue of skill and ability or as the ancients called it – the golden dust of life expended.

**And fourth,** the desire just to be – to see the wonder of the world - to gaze upon the horizon line, to walk with no destination, to view the Milky Way on long summer nights, to look with amazement upon the other forms of life that dwell with us, and to realize that we need them all to complete our own existence.

And of course – all these four dimensions of desire - to learn, to meet, to express and just to be - are not discreet but are intertwined, they co-exist, they intermingle; even here tonight they are all present and we are fulfilled.

And now as the music says – is that all there is? -- is that really all there is? - not quite.

These four desires are not only an intertwined whole, they all lead to confrontation with the unmeasurable words of life:

Courage, compassion – both on display at their finest last week, justice, integrity, forgiveness, fidelity, mercy, hope, and love.

These and others of their kind are the words that will be confronted in all four strands of the cord, because they are the true content of life. For we are spiritual beings and all material things and events –even my own beloved Architecture – are in the service to our spiritual adventure.

Now what does that really mean?

When we say that someone is a good doctor we can pause - and imagine - that we could also have said those words to an Egyptian doctor, – four thousand years ago –when medicine was in a quite different state than our own. We know that knowledge was less, tools were primitive, no cat scans, or MRIs were available, nor any antibiotics, no vaccines of any kind.

And yet - we can imagine that these words were said to a doctor even then.

It is because the judgment of: good doctor, good teacher, good scientist, good architect - I could not leave that out- a good anyone, is dependent on the un-measurable words not the measurable words.
Kindness was already there, mercy was there, patience was there, courage was there and love was certainly there.

In fact, and this is the point, it is because of the unmeasurable words that all of the measurable words have come into being.

A good doctor will study to know more, will experiment, will seek better tools, will improve skills – all from care, kindness, and love.

And thus was it possible to have a good doctor in Egypt, 4000 years ago, just as there is one there today, and there will be one there 4000 years from now, with measurable words entirely different than ours today.

And so it is - all these four strands of the whole - these four great desires – it is they that will lead you to your spiritual growth.

For we are spiritual beings, unique individuals, self-governing – the real American dream – self governing, dwelling within the unmeasurable words of our being –

And thus, the fulfillment of life will always depend on how well we have faced and how well we have served in the presence of these words --and we also saw that last week .–

It is, in fact, how well you honor and how well you perform in relation to these unmeasurable words that will determine the trajectory of your life.

And it as also why I have always loved the motto of Virginia Tech –

ut pro sim – that I may serve. I first heard those words 50 years ago for the first time and I have loved them ever since.

Congratulations to all of you once again!

JAAN HOLT – December - 2012