

**REMARKS BY PRUDENCE MACKINTOSH
COMMISSION OF 125 REPORT PRESENTATION CEREMONY
MAIN MALL
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I never stand on this mall that I don't remember my small town classmate who claims to have seen more people right here than lived in his home town. He returned to his new dorm room and knelt down beside his bed and prayed, "Please God, don't let me be average." This place and its people have never been about "being average."

So every twenty five years the President of this great university complicates his life and the lives of his extraordinary staff by allowing a bunch of alumni and some alumni wannabees to go snooping around this campus, asking impertinent questions while stock piling good legal tablets, three ring binders, and "We're Texas" ballpoint pens.

As I look at this crowd and think back on the hours we've spent together in the last two years, I can't help wondering "Are these people who can't say 'No'?" or does Larry Faulkner have the goods on them? I will confess that I rarely say "No" when the University calls. I earned my English degree here in 1966 by crying in the dean's office, and I've always figured it could easily be revoked by some heartless administrator. President Faulkner has never threatened, but I really don't want to see the 1962 freshman posture pictures from Women's Gymnasium posted on the internet as part of the Knowledge Gateway. Our posture wasn't so bad, but the underwear was ugly. The call to serve on this commission became irresistible when President Faulkner's initial remarks on the State of the University contained this sentence, "Prudence requires that we prepare

now to operate as fully and responsibly as we can." With such authority, how could I refuse?

I think we say yes to these without counting the cost (a sizable chunk to Southwest Airlines) because in a way this University does have the goods on all of us. We love the buzz we feel when we step on this campus—a buzz that comes from knowing that something important, something extraordinary, is always happening here and while you're here, you are somehow a part of it.

You don't have to pay tuition or attend lectures or meetings to learn things here. You just keep your eyes open and eavesdrop. There are always surprises. I walked behind a pair of young Latina students and delighted in hearing one say, "Do you know what a bat mitzvah is?" "Yes," said her companion, "I think it's a Jewish Quinceañera" In the ladies lounge on the 3rd floor of the Union, I suddenly realized that I had interrupted the noontime prayers of two young Muslim women. Some members of my committee had lunch in the dorms and listened to students who had no idea that they were becoming part of our data shaping a new picture of this University and its future. Weren't you surprised to learn that the largest minority group in our entering freshman class is Indian/Pakistani?

As we served on this Commission, we had to constantly remind ourselves that we were not charged to replicate for future students the memorable experiences that we had here in '54? '66? Or even '95? Students here already matriculate among a far more diverse student body, learn in different ways, study fields of inquiry that we never knew. And it is accomplished with a fraction of financial support from a state that once paid most of the bills. This University gets by with a lot of help from its friends.

Each committee chair probably thought his topic and his committee were the very best. Sorry, mine easily wins hands down. I have to salute the people who put in their hours studying ways to improve the infrastructure at UT. Dr. Faulkner knew I would have snoozed off on that one. Members of my committee rarely missed a meeting because we had field trips and tremendous catching up to do technologically as we dreamed of libraries, museums, and collections and how they fit into a flagship university's future. Peering far into a new century we saw nothing but rapid change that will transform museum and library experiences and bring new excitement to learning for future students and scholars throughout the world. Looking back we held a handwritten W.B. Yeats poem torn and re-mended perhaps by the poet himself with library paste and pondered how new technology could not only preserve it, but offer that prickly sense of the creative process to the whole world.

We tackled our tasks with energy and enthusiasm, we took notes, we drew charts, we doodled on our legal pads, we toured and discovered the great strengths and resourcefulness of faculty and the people in charge of this University's cultural resources. I like to think we cross-pollinated as we went. We talked with colleagues and friends outside the university and clipped and circulated related information from magazines and newspapers. Much too soon, it seemed, we had to reduce all we'd learned to a page or two of strategic--or Kenny, were they tactical?--recommendations that might fit into an overarching dream.

At the first gathering of this commission in the Regents Room, I read on the wall those engraved words of former UT President H.V. Benedict: "Public confidence is the

only endowment a university must have.” President Faulkner, thank you for the opportunity you gave us to snoop and ask impertinent questions and renew the endowment of confidence not only in this remarkable institution but in ourselves and our fellow alumni.

Please God, don't let us be average.