



OPEN LETTERS. . .

From the President

It has now been six months since the Board of Trustees announced that they had unanimously selected a new President of Ottawa University and he had accepted. For most persons, this bit of information may arouse little more than casual interest; it is startling to me because I am that person who was elected President and it doesn't seem at all like six months have passed! When a responsibility is marked by stimulation and challenge, time passes quickly and fulfilling. However, when I pause to reflect upon the many decisions I have shared, the number of appointments, the number of alumni meetings, the number of churches preached in, the number of service clubs addressed, the number of miles traveled, etc., it would appear that it might well have been eight months that have passed! Let me share with some observations that have come into sharpened focus in this period of time.

The first cluster of observations has to do with appreciation. As a Board of Trustees member for almost five years, I was aware of the participation of many people in the thrust of sustaining Ottawa University. As I have begun to acquire more detailed knowledge of this network of alumni and friends, my gratitude is steadily deepened. Often I find myself quietly thanking God for the many people who have Ottawa University as one of the priorities in their lives, who have given amounts large and small to help us meet financial needs. Others have indicated ways in which their wills now include Ottawa University; some of our Board members are including OU in their estates as another "child," sharing equally in estate distribution. Amid these awarenesses, I have a greatly deepened appreciation for each of you who includes us in your financial gifts. Without you, we could not exist six months. Just the knowledge of you and the others who form this vast network of loyal support is a great source of encouragement and inspiration when the days get long and the agenda is heavy.

Another facet of my deepening sense of gratitude relates to the staff that serves the purpose and mission of Ottawa University. They are marked by competence, dedication, loyalty, and supportiveness. These traits can be found in every category of staff. Special commendation should go also to Russell Raker, OU Vice President for University Development, and his associates who helped us reach an incredible new high in gift income to the University in fiscal year 1977-78. Additionally, Terry Mathias, our Director of Admissions, and his staff saw their concerted efforts pay off in a total of 238 new students enrolling this fall. This represented an increase of over 6% as compared to the previous fall and the first time in seven years that we showed an increase over the year before.

A second cluster of observations has to do with a growing awareness of the "OU Spirit" and its indomitability. Talking with alumni from as far back as 1912 and others up to 1978 gives one a sense of history, of pride, of awe, and of confidence. The "OU Spirit" may have had lulls along the way, but it has never left. It is exciting to see that spirit in strong resurgence in our midst today. It is evident in the conversations, faces, and lives of the students. It is portrayed in the vitality, the dedication, and creativity of the staff. It is certainly evident in the athletic teams and it is present in our extracurricular activities. Every passing week portrays further evidence of the surging OU Spirit. Included in this is the high level and vitality of the spiritual life on campus evidenced in so many ways.

I sincerely hope many of you can stop by and visit the campus and feel this for yourself. It would give me an opportunity to introduce you to new people on staff, to students, to help you enjoy the beauty of the campus, to show you the new sports complex which is now under construction made possible by your gifts and the Mabee Foundation grant. It would be a privilege to show you what is happening at your school and to help you feel good about what your supportiveness is making possible.

A final cluster of observations has to do with resolves. While we are greatly encouraged by the events and glimmerings signalling new beginnings, we are still amidst an exceedingly crucial period. We are committed to stabilization of our fiscal situation. To do this requires two key components: strong budgetary controls in our operations and sustained gift income from our alumni and friends.

I can assure you that strong measures have been taken on campus to be faithful to that goal. The second imperative piece of the picture is in your hands. Will you resolve to join with us in this year of establishing the base upon which we will build a strong future?

Of equal importance is the need to enlarge our student body. We are encouraged by noting that we are significantly ahead of the past four years in number of applications received for the fall of 1979. Much of this is due to the vigorous activity of our recruitment staff. A great deal of credit is due also to alumni, churches, and friends who are sending us names of prospective students. To build a strong future requires that we have a student body composed of the kinds of persons recommended from these sources. Resolve to help us in this turnaround year by encouraging students of all ages to be thinking about attending Ottawa University and sending us the names of those who are of high school age now.

As these are important times of stabilization, they are also important times of clarification. I am deeply committed to helping the University fulfill its stated purpose in the Constitution. We are committed to being a quality liberal arts college which has at its heart the Christian faith, values and perspectives. I believe deeply that God's presence has been at the heart of our long history and must be to assure a long and lustrous future.

As I study the history of OU and sense the realities of the projections about the future of higher education, I state with all seriousness that our future is primarily in the hands of two groups: the OU alumni and our constituent churches. Insofar as we deserve and receive the support of these two groups, we can face the future with confidence undergirding our hard work and committed service.

I feel deeply privileged to be President of Ottawa University and to join with you in strengthening and extending our rich and exciting heritage. Thank you for this sense of partnership. Without that and without the support of a dedicated, competent staff I would find the challenges formidable. With hands joined with yours, theirs, and God's, the challenges still loom large, but they shall be seen to be conquerable and as prelude to the dawning of a new day. The OU Spirit is on the move! Join with us in giving its momentum and fullness of expression.