

From the Editor

Although The Common Times does not exist merely as an organ of self-congratulation, this edition includes three pieces that emphasize the identity and accomplishments of our own community.

First and foremost is a generous excerpt from John Reed's remarks, delivered at the unveiling of the UC founders' memorial plaque, which took place on January 9th. The event unfolded in an atmosphere of warmth, perhaps less boisterous than Common Time, but with the same sense of our own good fortune to be among gracious neighbors. For me, (call me melancholy), the celebration was also a time to think about the transience and transitions, and about the people I met here who are no longer with us.

And that gets me to thinking about the courage I believe it takes to devise complex plans late in life. To the founders and early pioneers who had the courage to create University Commons I say, "Yishar ko'ach!" which is Hebrew for "More power to you!"

Here are some highlights from John Reed's address, entitled "On the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Plaque Honoring the Founders of University Commons.":

"I suspect that most of us who learned of University Commons after construction had begun, and certainly those who have come to the community simply as purchasers of completed homes, have a limited awareness of the long process that produced it – and of the women and men whose imagination and vision and selfless work and persistence have brought us to this good hour.... Begun with informal discussions in 1986 and '87, the idea of a residential community for retired faculty had a gestation period of

at least twelve years. Early discussions, particularly a dinner discussion by the Bernsteins and the Freedmans, led to a concept around which others rallied. . . . A central element of that concept was that housing senior faculty near the campus (instead of sending them off to Happy Valley) would make their experience and wisdom available to the University community, and their own lives richer.

With the guidance and dogged persistence of those whom we honor today, University Commons came into existence. There have been a few changes along the way, broadening that concept: residential eligibility was extended to University of Michigan alumni and staff members, and more recently to alumni of other universities. But three basic themes remain: this is a residential community for seniors who know and understand the university experience because they have that experience in common; it is a residence for seniors who believe that an active mind is the key to a happy life; it is a residence for seniors who are willing to be of service to the University of Michigan and its community, to the extent that their knowledge and experience and energy permit, for it was on that assumption that the University made this prime parcel of land available to University Commons."

John Reed



Founders who were present at the dedication: Bradford Bates, Albert Feuerwerker, Frances Quarton, George Demuth, Claire Bernstein, Frances Weeks, Elizabeth Dexter, Lydia Bates and Margaret Demuth.

The Plaque



Bea Lawrence and Fran Weeks

A Poem for the Day

Betty Graham was inspired to make a new song out of an old hymn in honor of the unveiling of our plaque. She expresses feelings that we all share, though expressed by each in his/her own (and for some, secular) vernacular:

On the Dedication of the University Commons Founders Day Plaque

Bless this place O God we pray;
Make it safe by night and day;
Bless the walls so firm and stout,
Keeping want and trouble out;
Bless the roofs and dormers tall,
Let thy peace be over all.
Bless this door that it may prove
Ever open to joy and love.

Bless this plaque that it will be
Inspiration for all to see;
Bless the windows shining bright
Letting in God's heav'nly light;
Bless the hearth ablazing there,
With warmth ascending like a prayer.
Bless us all that we may be
Fit O God to dwell with thee.

Betty Graham

With acknowledgement to Helen Taylor, author of "Bless This House."



John Reed and Claire Bernstein—she unveiled the plaque

Asa Gray Lecture

This year's Asa Gray Lecture offers a chance to look backwards, rather than getting a glimpse of cutting-edge science, as we did last year. Tony



Morris, who chairs the Asa Gray committee, has provided us with the following early reminder of this year's occasion:

Mark your calendars for the annual Asa Gray Lecture, to be held this year on Monday, April 18, at 8:00 p.m. Our lecturer will be Emeritus Prof. Edward Voss of the botany department.

His topic will be "The Legacy of Asa Gray." Among other things, he will bring one of the tools that Asa Gray used in his work. This is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn about Asa Gray and his impact on the field of botany. Don't miss it!

Tony Morris

Your editor adds: The Asa Gray committee may well appreciate some volunteers to help carry out tasks either before or on the day of the lecture. Please consider offering them your time. And did



you know that a beautiful fuchsia wild lily has been named after Asa Gray? (There may have been other such botanical honorary namings.