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Portland State University

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Speakers

Portland State University, Joseph C. Blumel, Andrew Millar, Theresa Millar, Gordon Hearn, Miles Romney, and Frank Rodgers

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May 30, 1975

Portland State University

PSU Library Special Collections and University Archives

Oregon Public Speakers Collection

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[voices in background; band playing for first minute of recording]

JOSEPH BLUMEL: Ladies and gentlemen, could I have your attention please? I should like first of all to invite you to—if you're willing—move a bit forward, since I'm a little bit unsure about the amplification equipment and the competition from outside; maybe it would be a little easier for all of us if you would move forward just a bit.

I should like to begin the ceremonies this afternoon by welcoming you on behalf of the university to this very significant event in the life of this institution. It is a great honor and privilege for me to participate in these proceedings which honor a man with whom I have so long been associated, and whose judgement I respected so deeply, and for whom I had such deep, personal affection. I should like, also, to say at the outset that we owe a great deal of gratitude to a number of people who have made the event today possible. I want particularly to recognize our Director of Physical Plant and acting Vice President for Finance and Administration, Bill Nyland, who not only was instrumental in planning the campus, but in accomplishing the renaming of the library in honor of Dr. Millar. Bill, are you here? There he is, over there.

I should also like to thank the State Board of Higher Education for its participation in the renaming of the library, its approval, unanimous approval, and quick action on this redesignation. We have with us today two members of the State Board of Higher Education here, and should ask them to stand up and be recognized; Mr. Phillip Joss [applause] and Mr.

Mark Madden. [applause] I think I need not say that we are particularly proud of Mr. Madden because he's not only a member of the board, but a graduate student at Portland State University. I also should recognize although he may not be here today, Vice Chancellor Hundra, for his assistance.

Next, it's a great privilege and honor to introduce to you the Millar family, who are here today. Bran's daughter and Theresa's daughter, Connie... would you stand up, Connie? [applause] ...and Andy Millar [applause] ...and I'm going to ask Andy to say a brief word of greeting.

ANDREW MILLAR: I'd just like to tell everyone that I'm absolutely delighted to be here today. This was a totally unanticipated surprise on my part; as many of you know, I live in New York now. It was a tremendous surprise to be able to come here today. I am ostensibly in Oregon on business, therefore, I'll make my cracks very brief. I just wanted to say that when my father dedicated Library East, which is of course across the Park Blocks, back in October of 1960, he spoke of the library being at the heart of the academic experience. And he also spoke of being in the process of planning a new and larger library. Well, I'd like you to know how deeply honored all of us in the Millar family are that this new building, which was little more than an idea back in 1960, could be named after my father today.

When my father dedicated Library East back in 1960, and I'd like to quote what he said. "It may be wondered whether this building ought properly to be named for someone, and therefore at this time to be dedicated in or to his name. Myself, I think it should be very fitting to let it be known quite simply as 'the library,' and that it be dedicated to those who use it, students and faculty alike, in their solitary and joint pursuit of knowledge. It is a monument to knowledge already gained and to be greatly cherished, and an arsenal of knowledge in the endless struggle to roll back the barriers of the unknown and the dimly perceived." I'd like all of you who are here today to know how proud we are that this building, to which my father was so close, could today be dedicated in his honor, and be known not simply as "the library," but as the Branford Price Millar Library. Thank you everyone for being here. [applause]

BLUMEL: And now it's a particular pleasure to introduce to you the lady who was for so many years the great First Lady of Portland State University, Theresa Millar. [applause]

THERESA MILLAR: Thank you, President Blumel. I'm deeply touched to see so many friends of the university and of the Millar family here today. Connie, Andy, and I truly appreciate your presence. In dedicating this library in Bran's name, you couldn't have pleased and honored him more. And, knowing that you... [pauses] I'm sure that you know that he loved his work. He loved this university, and he was extremely fond of his larger family here in the academic

community. This handsome library was one of Bran's dreams, which he shared with many others and which became reality. With the help of countless numbers of other people here, a new image of Portland State was created, and a new center of learning emerged. Bran's own words at the time of the dedication of Library East in 1960, in what was then the College Center, could well have applied to this new library. At that time he said, "I suppose there is no experience more gratifying in collegiate life than the opening of a new library. It may be disputed whether the unavoidable metaphor of the library's being the heart of a college is altogether a satisfactory one, but it cannot be denied that it is at the heart of the academic existence. If it is not the exclusive instrument for keeping the life stream of the body academic in throbbing vital existence, it is at least one of them." In closing, may I give my thanks to all of you who so graciously planned this ceremony today. In dedicating this library to Bran, you have given to him a beautiful memorial, and to us a meaningful and memorable event. Thank you. [applause]

BLUMEL: I think it is immanently appropriate that to speak today on behalf of the faculty and administration of Portland State University at this dedication, we have chosen a man who not only was a professional associate of President Millar for many years, but a close, personal friend of the family. A man, perhaps, among us who knew Bran as well as any other person. I refer of course to our distinguished Dean of the School of Social Work, Dr. Gordon Hearn. [applause]

GORDON HEARN: Mr. President, Theresa, Connie and Andy, honored guests, and ladies and gentlemen. Here in the library beside the Florence Salzman Heidl portrait of Bran Millar, a new tribute has been added and it reads: "Branford Price Millar (1914-1975), second President, Portland State University (1959-1968). Scholar, teacher, humanist. The faculty's president. His presence set a standard of quality and grace." Now that really says it all. Although I believe I would want to add that he was also to an important degree the builder of the campus. If we were out on the beautiful library knoll, we could look in every direction and literally everything we would see except the Park Blocks themselves were either built or planned during the Millar presidency. And he was the developer of the curriculum, as well as the principal builder of the physical plant. Just as President Cramer moved us from the status of extension center to college, our second president moved us from college to the threshold of university status.

In 1959 when he arrived, there were undergraduate programs in eleven fields. When he retired from the presidency in 1968, there were twenty-four undergraduate programs and twenty-three at the graduate level. To speak on behalf of the university is a heavy responsibility because of the immense stature of the man we honor, and the depth of our respect and our affection for him. I've tried to think of what you would want me to say on your behalf, and it was helpful to read what was said by some of Bran's closest associates at the time of the

memorial gathering. They spoke of his accessibility and his wisdom. They noted his pretension-bursting humor. He was characterized as a private person of no affectation, and a strong sense of who he was. He was modest, never assuming that because he had been chosen to lead, he was of an order higher than other human beings. He was eloquent, firm, and fair. Chancellor Lieuallen characterized him as a man for all seasons, whose ready adaptations seemed to flow from his enthusiasm for whatever he might be doing, from his eagerness to do well whatever he was about, from his sheer enjoyment of the association with his friends and colleagues.

It's interesting, too, to see how he saw himself. In an article on governance of state colleges written after he had left the presidency, he wrote, "Now, I am not a utopist. I've never lived in, nor would even describe a utopia, neither am I at all satisfied with much I perceive in higher education. But I am not a revolutionary, lacking both energy and intelligence for the role. Something of a spectator, seeking for change with an eye for conditioning and timing for it. I betray myself to be something of a political animal, more specifically, an academic administrator." I've also had access to his papers, and read with sheer delight his annual reports to the faculty and a great many other speeches which he referred to as "greetings and remarks," uttered on the numerous occasions when learned societies and community organizations met on campus. These speeches reveal a great deal about Bran Millar, but principally his dedication to quality and excellence. He never gave an unprepared speech, except on one occasion when he had no choice, and in this instance, he apologized to the group. His speeches were written in complete detail, in his own hand, and often with much editing, no matter what the occasion. Each group was treated with the greatest respect, and he had a thoughtful message for each. Never did he talk down to any group, but rather would call upon his audience to think with him, to stretch their minds and their imaginations as they pondered some important and timely topic.

He was well aware that he was capable of making long speeches, and he chided himself publicly about this. At a faculty reception he said, "I have already said enough for one who was not going to make a speech. If the newcomers haven't already learned from an example or two, this specimen of a non-speech should forewarn you against any speech of mine which you might at some other occasion be so unwary as to be caught at. [laughter] I confess, though, that it is hard for me at least to say nothing in a few words. [laughter] I could merely have said, 'It's nice to see everybody back together again for another year,' and having said this, I will say no more." [laughter] And I might note that this non-speech was carefully typed in full. Such was his dedication to detail, his immense desire to always give his best, and how appropriate it is then, that in remembering him we should note the fact that above all, his presence set a standard of quality and grace.

We have referred to his "pretension-bursting humor." His speeches are replete with examples, and I thought it not inappropriate to give one brief example. In his annual report to the faculty in 1962, he began with the following greeting: "I am happy to indulge myself again in the privilege of extending the first official welcome to all new members, and a welcome back to all old hands for another academic year. To all newcomers, I can promise that you will find Portland a dynamic, forward-looking, and challenging enterprise. And to the others, I will say I trust we can make it again through the next nine or ten months." [laughter]

And if I may be permitted just one final word, I want to use it to attest to his very human quality. Bran Millar had a great respect and regard for us all, but for his family there was a deep and special affection. You'll catch this quality, I think, in this rather precious excerpt from his papers. He had been asked to speak at the Lincoln High School senior class banquet, the year that Andy graduated. And he began as follows: "My being asked to speak to you tonight presents to me a privilege and some problems. The privilege is that of being at a school in which I have very special interest. We have sort of mutual legacies. Portland State inherited the old Lincoln High School when nobody knew what to do with it. Lincoln High School, in its turn, inherited my son as a student. I didn't know what else to do with him! [laughter] The old Lincoln High School, which we call 'Old Main,' is a cultural monument, and as is not uncommon among monuments, they do present problems. I hope you haven't had as many problems with my son as I've had with old Lincoln! No wonder you abandoned it, and maybe you'll solve a problem abandoning him by allowing him to graduate." Then he said, "Actually though, we've both done well. I'm really pleased with both educational bargains."

How very appropriate it is that this library will now forever bear his name, for certainly this man for all seasons was first and foremost a scholar and a teacher. And everyone knows too, particularly the scholar, that the library is our principal resource. It's the heart of the academic community. How good and right it is then, that Library West is to become the Branford Price Millar Library, and that this is the way he will be known by all that follow. [applause]

BLUMEL: We are honored today to have with us to speak on Bran's contributions to Oregon education, a distinguished colleague from the staff of the State Board of Higher Education. A man who I have known and worked with for many years, and a man whom I know is well-known to you all for his work in the academic programs of the institutions of higher education in Oregon. I think it's particularly appropriate that he should speak today, not only because of his long association and personal regard for Bran Millar, but also because we all know Bran's commitment to quality in education. And the man I am about to present to you is the man who, above all, is responsible for watchguarding, for guaranteeing the quality of education in the

State System of Higher Education. I refer of course to Dr. Miles Romney, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; it's a great pleasure to present to you Dr. Romney. [applause]

MILES ROMNEY: Mr. Joss, Mr. Madden, Mrs. Millar, Connie and Andy, and President Blumel, and distinguished guests. It's a real privilege for me to be here this afternoon on this occasion when we commemorate the distinguished contributions that President Millar made to mankind in his lifetime. These are lasting contributions which have served us well and served the state well, and from which countless others will benefit in the future in generations yet unborn. Bran was a delightful person... can you hear back there now? Bran was a delightful person. He loved life and he showed it. Urbane, sophisticated, witty; he had a delightful capacity to invest all he did, even the most mundane tasks, with a certain *éclat*, a certain spark which was his sparkle which was his alone. Bran gazed out upon life in all of its complexities with an amused and tolerant understanding. He had a way of cutting through to the heart of matters and of illuminating issues with a wry, insightful, often humorous observation that stripped away any obfuscation or any sophistry with which the issue was clouded, laying bare the issue in its simplest elements. In counsel he was thoughtful and wise, as we as his colleagues often remarked. In action he was courageous and intrepid. He was not one to seek conflict, but when matters of principle were its issue, he would enter the fray gladly and with gusto. His bright, well-stocked mind, his articulate tongue, his ready wit, and the very considerable forensic ability that was his made him a wily and sagacious adversary, and not one to be provoked lightly.

Bran [clears throat]... was nurtured in the home in which the liberal and humane traditions were a part of the very air that he breathed. His father was a product of Harvard and Yale, and his mother was a college professor, and they surrounded Bran with an environment that spoke of the value of learning, and set before him the results of learning and the rewards of the search for knowledge. And so it was that Bran entered Harvard and earned three degrees there over a period of eleven years; years in which study was interspersed with teaching at Harvard University. English and humanities were generally the special focus of Bran's attention during those years and subsequently, but his interests were catholic, spreading across the liberal arts and encompassing the professional programs as well. His was the scholar's point of view, with respect for quality of achievement. He was an intellectual, and had the credentials and habits to prove it, but he was no intellectual snob. He understood and appreciated the role of professional preparation in colleges and universities.

He came to Portland State University in 1959 remarkably equipped for the great tasks that lay before him. He had a highly developed taste for excellence [shouted chanting begins in background] and a lively appreciation for intellectual achievements, yet he appreciated that our

college and universities are not solely for geniuses, that we cannot afford to slam the door in the faces of average students; he believed that if we opened wide the doors of educational opportunity, we should reap dividends from the most unlikely sources. His years of teaching at such institutions as Harvard and Maryland and Michigan State University had given him a keen motivation for professorial motivations. His appreciation for his professorial colleagues was reciprocated by them as evidenced by their strong support during his tenure as president, and by their welcoming him to their ranks when he left the presidency, and electing him to positions of leadership in the faculty in both PSU and in the inter-institutional faculty senate.

President Millar had the ability over a period of almost a decade to develop here and provide inspiring leadership for the development of the foundations of this university, and during his period of tenure as president the institution grew remarkably. In his decision to relinquish the presidency, President Millar was as direct and forthright as in all his decisions. He had given nine very taxing years to the presidency and he wanted now to return to the classroom in a professorial capacity. Reluctantly, the State Board of Higher Education acquiesced, expressing to President Millar the profound respect and appreciation that they felt for his great contributions to Oregon education generally, and to the development of Portland State University in particular. The transition from president to professor was made with the same easy grace and style as characterized Bran in all his activities, and the remaining year of his service to Portland State University and to the state of Oregon were of a piece in quality and effectiveness with the outstanding service he had given as president of this university.

And now we are meant to bestow his name upon this library, the foundations of which he labored so masterfully to establish. It is peculiarly fitting and proper that of all the buildings which grace this campus, which he was largely instrumental in developing, President Millar's name should be given to the library, for the library is the heart of the university; the library is a dynamic educational agency, which when well-run—as PSU's library is under the very able direction of Dr. Frank Rodgers and his staff—such a library is meshed in full gear with the curriculum, the research program, the institutional aims and objectives generally. The world of books and other learning resources that constitute a contemporary university library is the most remarkable creation of man. Nothing else that he builds ever lasts. Monuments fall, nations perish, civilizations grow old and die. But in the world of books, our volumes have seen this happen again and again and again, and yet live on, still young, still fresh, still telling men's hearts and minds of the hearts and minds of men centuries dead.

It was said in ancient times that wisdom is better than strength; that a wise man is better than a strong man. President Millar was a wise man and a strong man, and for those of us who knew him, he will remain a bright and vivid memory. To us, the attachment of his name to this library

will remain a tangible expression of the great admiration of the people of Oregon for President Millar's contributions to his adopted state; and to those who shall come after us, who will have no personal memories of President Millar, his name will become familiar as it should be, as they draw from the wisdom stored within the Millar Library in their continuing quest for knowledge and understanding. It is with pleasure then that we note here today the decision by the State Board of Higher Education to declare that this library should henceforth be known as the Branford Price Millar Library, in commemoration of the great and distinguished service of this great and good man to education in Oregon and particular to Portland State University. Thank you. [applause]

BLUMEL: Thank you, Miles, for that beautiful tribute to Bran Millar. I apologize for the brief interruption, but I trust the words were audible to you all. Finally, I should like to... I think it appropriate to present to you the director of the now Branford Price Millar Library, Frank Rodgers. [applause]

FRANK RODGERS: My friends, my non-speech is not typed... [laughter] mainly because it hadn't occurred to me that anybody would find it necessary for me to make one. Since somebody finds it necessary that I say something, I shall say it briefly. This building and its contents and the staff who provide its services represent, I think, the summit of Bran Millar's ideals and aspirations. And it is therefore a great honor today to participate in these ceremonies. But I find it also a challenge, because the naming of this library after Bran Millar challenges us to maintain those standards to which he aspired. We have grown, and we have come a long way since the building of the old library in 1960 to which Andy referred, and even since the opening of this library in 1968. I don't intend to bore you with statistics, but for a round figure... [loud voice in background] 200,000 volumes in 1968, half a million volumes now. This is the rate of our growth. We are proud of our services too, and while I can think of no individual in whose honor this might be better named, and while I can think of no building which might better bear Bran Millar's name, let me also assure Andy, that this library is and I hope always will be dedicated to its users. And in achieving that goal, we shall, I think, meet his wishes. That is all I have to say except that back in that direction, if you follow the corridor, there are refreshments... [audio cuts off; program ends]