

ORATION
for
William W. (Bill) Winspear
Conferral of the LLD Honouris Causa
University Canada West
18 October, 2006

Mr. Chancellor, I have the great pleasure of introducing to you and our Convocation Mr. William W. Winspear, DPA.

Bill Winspear is a native Albertan, a leading citizen of Dallas Texas, and a leading citizen of our own community in Sidney BC. He has received his CA as a graduate of the Alberta Institute of Chartered Accountants, and his university education was received, Mr. Chancellor, at the very University of Alberta that you led so successfully for so many years. It's School of Commerce, now the School of Business, was established in 1916 with six students. Shortly thereafter Bill's father, the business and academic giant Francis G. Winspear, came and taught accounting there for over twenty years, and also served as Director and Dean, *pro bono*. Francis once told me that a successful businessman has two careers, one earning the money and one giving it away, and in his autobiography he wrote that the latter "*requires even more prescience, more imagination, more executive skill.*"

Bill obviously listened to his father (who didn't!). "*My father instilled in me as a young man the importance of giving back, giving his time and money when he didn't have much of either,*" Bill says. "*Now, though, I've come to realize it is not so much an obligation as the most fun I can have with my resources.*" An emphasis on arts and education causes reflects Bills interests. He asks, "*Once you have a country, is it worthwhile being a civilization? Once you ensure you have jobs and shoes, then you need letters, music and art.*"

Bill himself has just received the University of Alberta Distinguished Alumni Award on Sept. 28, celebrating the outstanding achievements that have brought honour to himself and his alma mater in a multitude of ways.

Mr. Chancellor, William Winspear is a colossus of both Canadian and American business, education, the performing arts, and philanthropy. After managing companies in BC and Ontario, he moved to Dallas in 1975. By 1985 he was President and Chief Executive Officer, and eventually majority owner, of Associated Materials, a building-supply manufacturer, with annual sales in excess of \$500 million. He sold his company and retired in 2003. He told me that he "*kept a third of the proceeds, gave a third to my five children, and gave a third to charity*".

Singing as a boy soprano, he was a three-time winner at the old Edmonton Musical Festival. He jokes that he has "*a lifetime range of four octaves. I went from two octaves above middle C to two octaves below.*" He recalls his father taking him to see travelling opera productions at the Edmonton Sales Pavilion more than 50 years ago. The pavilion also hosted livestock sales. "*There was a certain smell. And it seemed a train always came by, just when the tenor was trying to hit high C.*" But those aromatic visits created in him a deep appreciation for music and performance that has created huge benefits to the world.

As a past-president of the Dallas Opera Society, Bill remains active on its board and is a charter member of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts Foundation. In 2002, he gave \$42 million, the largest private donation in the history of Dallas, to help build the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts, where the opera house is now named **The Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House**, one of three theaters comprising the Center. Karen Stone, General Director of The Dallas Opera, said that *“Together, Bill and Margot serve as the engine that keeps us running and no individual has done more than this extraordinary couple to secure a tremendously exciting artistic future for this company.”*

As well as that *tour de force*, they have also supported many other educational and cultural causes in Dallas, which were recognized by conferral on Bill of the honorary Doctor of Performing Arts degree by the University of North Texas.

I know we have some opera lovers in the audience, so I should also tell you that Margot was the founding Vice President of the Edmonton Opera, and President of the Women's Committee of both the Vancouver Opera Company and the Canadian Opera Company.

Mr. Chancellor, the Winspear generosity can be described as *philanthropy without borders*, for their impact is also felt in Canada.

In Edmonton, where his father is remembered in the Winspear Centre concert hall, Bill has now established a special care facility, with 136 beds that gives aging residents a chance for more independence, in honour of his mother Bess.

In 1996 Bill lent his support to the Sanscha Community Cultural Centre Foundation (SCCCF) by becoming a member of the Honorary Patrons Council with a generous gift that inspired the beginning of the fund-raising, and he later contributed a lead gift that helped complete the Foundations' goal. The new centre was named to honor Bill's aunt, Dr. Mary Winspear, Founder and Principal of Weston School in Montreal and a long time resident of the Saanich Peninsula.

Like their father, Bill and his brother Claude have also made generous donations to the University of Victoria, in particular for the Winspear Media Commons (named after his mother), and the Claude Winspear Resource Rooms.

And needless to say, Bill has been very supportive of University Canada West, and an ongoing source of encouragement because he, to quote, *“believes in what we are doing”*.

Mr. Chancellor, with the enthusiastic concurrence and support of the University Academic Council, it gives me great personal pleasure to request that you confer upon William W. Winspear the degree of LLD *honoris causa*.