

Marc's Development as a Leader

Seattle Memorial Service

Harry Strachan, June 8, 2002

Cathy and I have a long-standing friendly argument. She claims that in early 1972 she met Marc, they fell in love and that's how INCAE got a valuable faculty member and I a close friend. I claim that I hired Marc for INCAE and that's how Cathy found the love of her life. Whoever's right, the fact is that it has been my privilege to know Marc for over 30 years in many different roles. So choosing what to share today has not been easy.

I could spend the time thanking the University family. The support you have given Marc and Cathy is beyond anything that could have been expected or that they would have received at another university. Or, talking about Marc's many achievements.

But with your permission I want mainly to talk to those of you for whom Marc is a role model; you his students (some of whose beautiful tributes we saw on tape last night); you Robbie, Annie and his nieces and nephews who aspire to live a life like his. I'd like to focus on three strengths that I believe lay at the heart of his success. Strengths, that did not come that naturally but that he consciously developed.

First, to a degree that is quite rare, **Marc mastered the secret of both professional depth and breadth**. When I first knew him, most of his training was as a political scientist. I don't recall being overly impressed with either his quantitative analysis or his strategic vision. But he developed an ability to take financial statements apart, to visualize detailed workplans, to think through complicated problems. He shamelessly borrowed a wide variety of paradigms from other disciplines. He learned to use this analysis to find creative solutions. I saw this dramatically on Marc's last trip to Costa Rica. His presentation to the Board of the

Arias Foundation demonstrated a mastery of detailed financial and programmatic analysis no one on the board had seen and ended in a new strategy that would solve otherwise fatal problems.

Second, Marc learned to take courageous risks though by nature he was fundamentally risk adverse. In 1980 INCAE's Board asked us to help find a strategy to save the school. INCAE was \$5M in debt, had no endowment. It was losing \$1M a year and could no longer attract students or faculty to live in Sandinista Nicaragua.

We concluded that the only way to save the school was through an audacious plan. It required regional expansion, a second campus in Costa Rica, new sources of funding in Europe, a positioning of the school that avoid political polarization. There were nine critical elements to the strategy – each had to happen for the school to survive..

When no Latin American could be found to lead the implementation of this strategy, we were asked to return to Nicaragua. We sat down to calculate the odds. Each element was achievable; in fact, had a greater than 50% probability of success. However, when you multiplied all nine together, the odds of success were less than 10%.

For Marc the decision was painfully difficult. He had a secure U.S. teaching position here in Washington; he was on track to tenure. He'd just been named teacher of the year. The thought of what he was risking taking his family to Nicaragua tied his stomach in knots. Yet when he visualized the payoff for the region, he realized that there are times when it is better to fail in a glorious endeavor than to succeed at something much less important.

There is a nice ending to the story. The strategy succeeded. INCAE achieved its five year targets one year early. And Marc personally gained a visibility that vaulted him to tenure at Harvard, an executive position at CARE, and the deanship of the Evans School. He was convinced he never would have had those opportunities had he not conquered his fears and taken the INCAE risk.

Finally, **Marc learned to put people first.** A month ago when Marc was met on the steps of Evans Hall by so many of you, he took the time and energy to virtually touch everyone on the steps before entering the building. I don't think he would have done that 20 years ago. Marc got better, later in life, at communicating warmth and caring, at sensing what a group was capable of doing. If his own vision went beyond, if his own pace was faster, I think he learned to respect what was in the heart of others to do.

This came, in part, from a growing awareness that you his students and colleagues, your development, your achievements, your destinies were his real work, more important than his books, the program, or even the school.

Marc, to an extraordinary extent, achieved his potential. In that process there is no doubt he became a great man. He saw in many of you tremendous potential. And as you seek to achieve that potential, I urge you to follow his example. He cultivated breadth and depth in his professional life. He was courageous in taking risks for important causes. He learned that leadership is about people not tasks.

In this and much more, he was a role model to all of us. And we're going to miss him greatly.