

**Excerpts from the Shorter University Library Groundbreaking Ceremony
December 3, 2010**

Welcome

Shorter University President Dr. Harold E. Newman:

Good morning. To Trustee Chairman Dr. Nelson Price, Members of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Robert White of the Georgia Baptist Convention, Members of the faculty and staff, Alumni, Donors and Friends:

You are our honored guests today, and I am thrilled to welcome you to this important event in the life of Shorter University. This ceremony is the official beginning of a long-awaited construction project that will add a new wing to our library and increase our ability to serve the students on this campus.

Thank you for your attendance today and your support of this project.

We are honored to have several individuals taking part in today's ceremony, and I would like to introduce them to you at this time.

First on the program is **Dr. Carmen Acevedo Butcher**, who in 1982 became the first 4.0 graduate of Shorter College. She now serves as a member of our English faculty and as our scholar-in-residence. This spring, Dr. Butcher's fifth book, *The Cloud of Unknowing* earned her recognition as Georgia Author of the Year in the area of creative nonfiction.

Throughout my presidency, it has been an honor to work closely with our **Trustee Chairman Dr. Nelson Price**. Dr. Price is pastor emeritus of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta and is the author of 17 books. He is also a great friend to this institution, having provided prayerful leadership and untiring encouragement to us over the years.

We have also been blessed to have support from the Georgia Baptist Convention and, in particular, from its **Executive Director Dr. Robert White**. Dr. White has led the convention to support us financially, to send us students, and to pray for us on an ongoing basis.

Six other individuals will join us as we break ground, including a few who you will hear more about in a few moments. These individuals include

- Our **Director of Library Services Deborah Meyer**, who draws from her 25 years of library experience as she leads the university's library staff.
- **Shorter graduates Charles and Lee Hight**, who were instrumental in leading an alumni fund-raising campaign that was crucial to our success.

- **Mrs. Suzanne Scott**, who stepped into the leadership role in our Development and Alumni operation and worked hard, along with her staff, trustees and alumni volunteers, to complete this campaign.
- **Allen Hornback of Marietta-based ADE Builders**, who will be our contractor for this construction project
- And **Angel Brown, who serves as president of Shorter University's Student Government Association**. She is a junior from Dalton, Georgia, majoring in Psychology. Angel represents the thousands of Shorter students who will be the beneficiaries of this library expansion.

From *Bōc-hord* to *Librarye* to Livingston: The Value of Libraries
Shorter University Scholar in Residence Dr. Carmen Acevedo Butcher:

As student and teacher, I've walked down this sidewalk into the Livingston Library countless times, often with my priceless friend of 32 years, Beth Moore Ragusin, who's here today; so first, I'd like to thank all who gave generously of their time and other resources to make this groundbreaking ceremony possible: the Chairman of the Board, Dr. Nelson Price; the Board members; the President, Dr. Harold Newman; the Director, Mrs. Deborah Meyer; the excellent Shorter University librarians; former Director, Mrs. Kimmetha Herndon, now Samford University's Library Director, and here today—welcome back, Kim; and also *each* individual, foundation, alumnus, and alumna. Thank you all.

We're here to celebrate the value of a library to a university!

Why have humans forever treasured books? Even Groucho Marx said a book is a man's best friend, well, sort of—he actually said, "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read." It once took the lives of 50 to 60 sheep to make **one vellum manuscript** on which a monk could copy the New Testament using a stylus dipped in oak-gall ink. "Books" (I say it in quotation marks) were so valuable they were literally chained individually to wooden bookcases all over medieval Europe. My favorite chained library can still be visited in the British hometown of my husband, Sean—Hereford. Even earlier, books were **carefully** written on the smooth inner bark of trees; Romans called this "bark" *liber, l-i-b-e-r*, as in *library*. For similar reasons, the word *book* has its ROOTS in trees, in the Old English word for "beech tree"—*boc: b-o-c*. And in Old English days, a library was a *bōc-hord*, "book-hoard."

Now, fast-forward to this past November when I visited the Harvard Book Store and watched in amazement as Paige M. Gutenberg (a.k.a. the Espresso Machine) created a library-quality 300-page paperback in four minutes. With a new book on *Beowulf* **still warm** in my hand, I walked out into the frosty weather of Harvard Square, **marveling**. Whether laboriously hand-copied on "bark" or vellum, printed-on-demand in four minutes, or e-read on Kindle, books and the libraries that house them have always been valued by human beings. Why?

Over 100 years ago, the President of Harvard, Charles William Eliot, told us why in a speech on the library's importance to an education, saying, [quote]: "At the **heart** of every university there must be a great library" [end quote]. The late Mississippian novelist and Civil War historian Shelby Foote, known for his quirky, engaging commentary in the Ken Burns PBS documentary, *The Civil War*, defines a *university* unforgettably, saying [quote]: "A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library" [end quote].

So, it's no accident that the first time we see the word *library* **written** in English it's in a famous ancient work of philosophy. It seems to me there's a natural affinity between the words *library* and *philosophy*, which is literally "a love of wisdom," from *philo* and *Sophia*. Chaucer **coined** the word *library* to use in his popular 1374 translation of Boethius's 6th-century book *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In it, Lady Philosophy advises a lugubrious, **unfairly** imprisoned Boethius (and us) **not** to seek transitory earthly treasures such as money, fast cars, beauty, or power, because they just fade, wither, become moth-eaten, tarnished, broken, lost, or stolen.

Instead, Lady Philosophy advises us, in essence, to **renew** our minds in a library, echoing Paul's wisdom in Romans: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the **renewing** of your mind" (12:2). In Chaucer's beautiful Middle English, you can hear Lady Philosophy (we could also call her "Lady **Wisdom**") as she says to Boethius: "I ne axe nat rather the walles of thy **librarye**, than after the sete of thi thought, in whiche I put noght whilom **books** . . . but . . . that maketh **bokes** worthy." (405): "I'm not interested, Boethius, in the decorations on your library walls, but in discovering **where your mind lives**, because that's where I put **[the wisdom]** that makes books valuable."

And if we go back to 1,250 B.C., and stand before the door of a famous library beside the Nile River, we find an apt metaphor for the value of books. It's etched into a dusty lintel above the door leading into the Library of Thebes, [quote] "Healing-Place for the Soul" [end quote].

Today we celebrate the **soul** value of a **vibrant library** to the **health of a Christian university**. Sure, technology speeds up everything, including book-making, but ancient questions are never in a rush, and still get asked, and always will. T. S. Eliot asks in his play, *The Rock*, what is knowledge anyway without wisdom [quote]: "Where is the wisdom we've lost in knowledge? / Where's the knowledge we've lost in information" [end quote]?

What doesn't fade, wither, become moth-eaten, tarnished, broken, lost, or stolen? The wisdom of Christ, who is **the** Truth, and in my experience, seeking the Truth is an exercise in humility and discipleship that often happens in a library.

Therefore, our Livingston Library, its expansion, and its *invaluable* faculty of librarians are essential for the *Gesundheit* of Shorter University because, as Proverbs says, "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost **all** you have, get understanding" (4:7).

May God bless this library and each person who enters it, and may we celebrate the value of libraries now and forever. Amen.

President's Remarks:
Dr. Newman

Shorter University has seen remarkable growth during the time that I have been privileged to serve as president. Our traditional student body has nearly doubled in size. We have added new academic programs, such as our Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program and our Online Programs. We have renovated campus spaces such as the Front Circle and expanded off this hill into the Ledbetter College of Business facility, the 408 Shorter Avenue facility that houses our Development and Alumni staff, and the facility for the School of Nursing. We have built an apartment-style student residence hall and constructed an artificial turf playing and practice field.

All of these projects have been important and have greatly impacted life on this campus. None, however, is as close to my heart as is this library expansion. As Dr. Butcher has shared, a library serves as the very heart of the academic life of a university. A healthy library fuels student learning and faculty research.

Shorter University is blessed to have a library staff that values student learning and works hard to provide resources that will enable our students to fulfill their highest potential. The Library Staff is headed by Director of Library Services Deborah Meyer. Mrs. Meyer has taken the library renovation as a personal project, negotiating with a nearby carpet manufacturer for the donation of new carpet for the current library.

I also would like to recognize the two other individuals who have headed our library during my time at Shorter: **Mary Mac Mosley and Kimmetha Herndon.**

Several years ago, our Campaign for Library Excellence was identified as vital to ensuring the university's place as a premiere institution of educational excellence. Our increased student enrollment has made the need an urgent one, and we are grateful for the support of the foundations and individuals who have responded to our requests for financial support.

Your generosity is enabling the construction of a \$4.2 million library wing that will add 18,000 square feet of library space to the Livingston Library. I would like to thank the **architectural firm, Cooper Carry of Atlanta, and our lead architect, Mr. Tim Fish**, for putting together a plan for a stunning addition. The design, which you can see part of on the sign behind me, calls for the inclusion of a cathedral atrium and space for housing library materials as well as for student study space. My favorite feature is the large fireplace that will be surrounded by soft seating to create an inviting environment.

There are many individuals who should be recognized for their contributions to the success of the library campaign.

First, a project of this scope certainly needs support from an institution's governing body, and Shorter has been blessed in this area. **Trustee Chairman Dr. Nelson Price** has supported our emphasis on this key priority and has worked personally and encouraged others to work to aid in our fundraising efforts. Also providing significant leadership for the campaign has been **Mr. Nolan Robinson, chairman of the Development Committee** of our Board of Trustees. We are also deeply appreciative of the leadership of **Mr. Bob English, chairman of the Board's Building and Grounds Committee**. Each of these gentlemen has provided invaluable assistance with the library planning and fundraising, and I thank them on behalf of the institution.

Shorter University is also thankful to **Dr. Robert White and the leadership and members of the Georgia Baptist Convention** for their financial support of the library expansion. The convention's CIEP program has provided significant financial support, for which we are most grateful. That support has combined with financial contributions from **several foundations**, including two Atlanta-based foundations that made sizable contributions but asked that we keep their gifts anonymous. These foundations provided not only needed funds, but also deadlines that helped us communicate the urgency of this effort.

Individual contributions are also an important part of our equation of success. Significant gifts from individuals will be recognized on a plaque in the building, and I regret that time does not allow me to recognize each of you individually at this time. I do want to underscore, however, how very grateful we are to **each trustee, each Shorter alumnus and alumna, each member of the faculty and staff, and each friend** of the institution who contributed to this project. Your investment in the education of our students will not be wasted.

I would like to single out a special group of Shorter graduates who led a grass roots effort to finish out the alumni portion of the campaign so that we could request the capstone gift from a foundation. **Romans Charles and Lee Hight** stepped forward to volunteer to head a "Fabulous Fifty" campaign that sought support from alumni and friends. The Hights were joined by graduates **Nancy Bryan, Bill and Betty Zane Morris, and Jerry and Janice Vick**. These seven individuals not only met but exceeded their goal.

Finally, I want to publicly thank the **staff in our Development and Alumni Division** for their tireless work on this campaign. The library renovation project has been on their to-do lists for a long time, and we are happy to check it off as complete.

Please join me in a round of applause for everyone whose gifts and efforts have made this day a reality.