

Breakfast recognition, Carolina Inn, October 12th, 2015

Pat [Gensel], Chancellor Folt, colleagues, and award recipients: I am glad to have a moment to give thanks for this recognition.

My leadership of the North Carolina Botanical Garden was, in fact, 28 intense and challenging years. It's great that my wife, Carolyn, is here because she is the best—and in fact only—first hand witness I have of that.

It is hard to imagine that I was once 38 years old or that the Garden had 12 staff members and rotary phones. Or that a public street, now closed and converted to wildflower displays, once bisected the land. Or that Battle Park, Parker Property, the UNC Herbarium, and the Carolina Campus Community Garden were not yet under our wings.

The Garden, in my obviously unbiased opinion, has become a fabulous place and one that is now a leader on important issues nationally.

The Garden has established and proven a seriousness and breadth of purpose that matches and supports the mission of our greater University in teaching, public service, and research.

When we opened the LEED Platinum James and Delight Allen Education Center, a Robert Frost line came to mind. In the poem "Mowing" he writes:

...the fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.

[Frost is listening to his scythe as he cuts the grass...the scythe is whispering to the ground, but what is it saying? This line is the answer to what the scythe is saying]

The "fact" of the Garden and the dreams and the labor over those 28 years were the work of many...the staff, board, volunteers, and our critical support in the Office of the Provost.

The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.

Though I am the only one standing here, many produced the labor, fact, and fun of my 28 years as director.

Many thanks to all.

Peter White