



Installation Speech
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August 14, 2015
John Whitman Keeler Theater

Distinguished guests, trustees, teachers, staff, parents, students and friends of the School - it is a pleasure to address you today, and I thank you for the warm welcome to Cincinnati Country Day School. I am honored and humbled to become Country Day's 12th Head of School today.

Before I begin my remarks this afternoon, I wish to make a public service announcement. I have been here for several weeks and have seen the look of fear in people's eyes as they look at my nametag. It is a Czech name that Microsoft Word autocorrects as "Jacuzzi." I pronounce my name "Ja-catchy" – it's catchy. Also, my predecessor Rob Macrae was indeed a doctor. I am not a doctor, nor have I played one on TV.

I would like to begin today with some further words of thanks. As I stated in my address in January, I am deeply grateful to Julie Fleishmann, Jon Hall, Chip Pettengill, and the other members of the search committee for showing their confidence in me and sharing the genuine love they hold for this school. It made the decision to join this community an easy one.

I would also like to thank the members of the Transition Committee and the Parents' Association for the work you have done in preparing for my family's arrival. From the first night I arrived to a fridge full of food in the newly renovated Broadwell House to the beautiful flowers and planters delivered just days ago, we have been able to make Broadwell House feel like a home for our family remarkably quickly. In fact, we held our first faculty/staff reception this past Wednesday and shared the home with our colleagues.

There was a big turnout as everyone is so interested to see the work that has been completed.

We are excited to be living at Broadwell House and want the community to know that the lights are on, and we are excited to welcome Country Day families – past, present and future – back home to campus. Just give us a few more days to hang the pictures before you knock on our door.

Next, I would like to thank the faculty and staff for working so hard to make us feel part of the school and community. Working at a school is a busy job, and it does not help when the new guy, who is supposed to be guiding the ship, does not even know how to scan a document despite Jeff Spain's best efforts. Faculty and staff, you have been patient and generous of spirit – thank you.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the community. When I spoke to you in January, I referred to the spirit of the school, and I have felt that welcoming spirit from all of the parents, students, and friends I have met on campus these past weeks. Although I have not learned everyone's name, I know who is associated with Country Day and who is not. The Country Day people are the ones who have greeted me with a smile. Thank you, that means so much.

A moment ago, Jon Hall shared some of Country Day's history with us. Jon is beginning his role this year as the president of the Board of Trustees, and though today is not an installation ceremony for him, let also take a moment to recognize that transition and welcome Jon to his new position.

Like Jon, I have been studying Country Day's origins. Ashely Ward has been very kind to support this endeavor communicating with both Lindsay McLean at the Indian Hill Historical Society and Paula Brock in our Development Office. I am learning because I need to understand why Country Day was founded and the intention of its founders. As someone coming from a school that is only five years old, I can tell you change happens quickly, and keeping the original intentions in mind is a crucial guide for future development.

The research has been very interesting. Did you know that in the first years of the school, sports competitions were held between the "Dark Blues" and the "Light Blues" in baseball, boxing, scoutcraft, horsemanship, golf, and track? Back in '26-'27, it was a close competition with the Light Blues winning the year by a score of 375-369. I also learned that every boy had a physical exam by one of the three school doctors at the beginning and the

end of the school year with records provided in duplicate to the headmaster and to the parents. Physical development was important. The school boasted that in the '27-'28 school year, there was an average weight gain of 1.15 pounds per student per month across the entire student body. Clearly, this was in an age before HIPAA regulations. An element I found most interesting about these early years was the mode of school transportation. Many boys took a bus daily. Here is a description from the Country Day 1927-1928 school catalogue:

Transportation for the boys and the staff to and from the school is furnished by contract with a long experienced school bus operator. A direct route, from a point east of Gilbert Avenue, mainly along Madison Road, was selected after careful investigation and from experience as the safest as well as the shortest way to the school.

The buses start at Park Avenue and McMillan Street, at 8:05 a.m., follow the scheduled time for each stopping point, turn from McMillan onto Woodburn Avenue, and run thence on Madison Road to Madisonville, where they take the Camargo Road, Miami Road, Shawnee Run Road, and Given Road to the school, arriving at approximately at 8:50 a.m.

The regular schedule is maintained throughout the school year, except for the period of short daylight hours, when the school closes at 4:20 p.m. so the buses may cover the entire return trip in daylight.

At least one member of the staff is in charge of the boys in each bus. The buses stop only on the right hand side of the road, do not turn down side streets, and cross arterial traffic at Madison Road and Observatory Avenue only.

No bus is permitted to leave the starting point until a member of the staff is aboard. The speed is rigorously confined in all cases to legal limits. The country roads on the school route are of concrete or macadam and were built or rebuilt in 1926 and 1927. There are no railroad grade crossings in the city, each bus comes to a full stop, and proceeds only when the tracks have been crossed on foot and the bus signaled over.

The bus fee was \$100 per year. For an additional fee of 50¢ on Wednesdays, the boys could take the early bus home. Parents were encouraged to schedule doctors and dentists visits on Wednesdays as the school stated, "It is not compatible with the purpose of the school to excuse the boys at other times or to excuse them on Wednesdays for other than important reasons."

A journey of close to 90 minutes or more must have been a long time for those boys to travel every day. With the emphasis placed on safety, we can assume that student transport on buses at that time was not a common practice. It would have been more convenient to build a school within walking distance of the majority of students, but the founders went “well beyond the suburbs, then five miles farther.” “Well beyond the suburbs, then five miles farther.” Why? Why this deliberate choice?

In practical terms, the school was intended to replicate the popular Country Day movement begun in the late 19th century. As Jon shared with us in his comments, this was a progressive education that sought to capture the benefits of a “whole child” experience and to get the boys out of the city and into clean, healthy open spaces.

I ask that you consider “five miles farther” more than a physical distance, however, but also a metaphor for the unknown.

The unknown has been around for a long time. In fact, it helped speed up the “concept to market” process for fire tens of thousands of years ago. Early mapmakers were well acquainted with the idea of the unknown because the first maps could only capture those areas that had already been visited. For areas yet explored, they used the interesting device of placing a dragon on the edge of a map. The dragon signified the border between the known and the unknown and represented danger and threat.

While it would make sense to avoid these border regions, storytellers have actually sought this territory for many years. The idea of a journey into the unknown in which the protagonist or narrator enters the wilderness, faces tests that require great moral strength, and returns a transformed person is a very common tale. In fact, The Country Day Upper School reading list in 1926 included such “hero’s journey” stories and memoirs as Homer’s *Odyssey*, James Fennimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, and Richard Henry Dana’s *Two Years before the Mast*.

Education is, by definition, a journey into the unknown; so when our founders built a school “five miles farther” to bring the boys out of the comfort of downtown Cincinnati, they also built a curriculum that would challenge and test the students and lead them to transformative growth of mind, body, and character. This program quickly became one of the city’s finest academic programs that prepared boys well for college but also for civic duty. Country Day graduates have gone to positions of responsibility here in Cincinnati in law, business, finance, health care, government service, education, and fine and performing arts. These graduates have also given back to the city with funding, time, and resources to many of the institutions that make Cincinnati a center of culture. It is said that the proof is

in the pudding, and indeed Country Day's alumni ranks include a host of early graduates for whom the metamorphosis of the journey "five miles farther" led them to give back.

And what of today as we begin preparing for the school's 100th year? While there are few corners of the world remaining that a mapmaker cannot chart with great precision, our future is still filled with dragons.

Recent estimates project that human population will peak at 11 billion by the end of the century. That growth, combined with a changing global environment, will bring significant challenges such as global warming, environmental degradation, state and religious sponsored conflict, global infectious disease, and global poverty. The unknown has grown in scale and complexity for the next generation and at speeds and levels of efficiency as never seen before. With contagious viruses transportable by inter-continental flights and data vulnerable from hackers around the world, the threats and dangers are not distant problems either.

To prepare our current students for college and life as directed by our mission, we need to return to the founder's wisdom to expand our view "five miles farther," but I would argue we need to expand that scale. When considering the unknown of the future, I would argue we need to build a journey that will bring them "5,000 miles farther."

"5,000 miles farther" would be a real and practical exploration of places beyond Indian Hill. As the community knows, I am just finishing an experience living and working in China. I know that the graduates of Cincinnati Country Day School will lead lives that will require them to be culturally literate as they travel throughout the world in a rapidly changing global economy. Developing empathy and understanding can only be achieved when someone is taken out of their own culture and allowed to experience another. Our student body president David who spoke earlier is an excellent example of this. A journey of exploring another's condition can indeed happen in a place like China, but it can also happen as close as in other sections of Cincinnati.

"5,000 miles farther" also means looking at the academic program to determine what is rigorous and challenging today that will allow for good college placement but also equip our graduates to pursue lives of integrity and service. There is so much that is excellent at Country Day, and we need to balance the tradition of rigor with the boldness of innovation to allow our students to create meaning out of their unknown world.

"5,000 miles farther" means attracting and retaining the hallmark of the Country Day experience – our faculty and students. We will need to think about we can continue to bring the best and the brightest to both sides of the classroom.

“5,000 miles farther” means using the long-range planning process we are about to begin to think about the year 2026 when the school celebrates its centennial. But also to think about the year 2043 when a child enrolling in the house during our centennial will receive his or her Country Day diploma.

“5,000 miles farther” is an expansion of our founders’ vision, but I cannot take credit for being the first to expand the vision. Leaders and educators such as Davison, Pattison, Yeiser, Wright, Raushenbush, Strauss, Hofmeister, Hopple, and Macrae have done this in the school’s first 89 years. Country Day has a powerful tradition of expanding its purpose and has transformed from its founding into an 18 month to 18-year college preparatory world-renowned coeducational institution. This growth was not easy and, at times challenging, but it has given us the opportunity to enter the 90th school year with strength and promise.

In a way, the leaders who have come before have already expanded the mindset from “five miles farther” to “50 miles farther” and “500 miles farther.” Today, I am just proposing the addition of another zero to continue the momentum begun before me.

And so, as we prepare for a new school year beginning on Tuesday, let us return for a moment to the young boys who boarded their bus downtown ready for a day of school with a ride that would take them far beyond their homes. As our boys and girls come to campus next week, some will still be on buses and many will be in the family car. For most, it will not take 45 minutes, and they will not need to get out of the car when approaching the train tracks. Like their predecessors before, however, they will be taking a journey. A journey filled with excitement and joy but also a journey with true purpose and challenge.

Let us consider how to best help these young people in their journey of “5,000 miles farther.” Thank you.