



UMSL Alumni Inspiration Speech 2013 Founders Dinner

Tom Minogue's remarks at the University of Missouri-St. Louis' 2013 Founders Dinner (September 19, 2013)

I know I'm here to talk about UMSL, but I would be remiss if I didn't say a few words to the superintendent of my high school – Hazelwood – who received one of the big awards tonight. Sir, even after all these years... it can still be a little scary to meet the superintendent. I don't remember you ever being on my short list of people I wanted to see. And if anything untoward may have happened in high school in the early 1970's, that I may have had some modest role in, all I can say is... I'm a lawyer – the statute of limitations has already run. It's too late to get Minogue! Congratulations on your award tonight, Sir. And now, on to UMSL!

Fifty years ago, when UMSL opened its doors for the very first time, I was 9 years old. Long time ago. Why, back then, if you mentioned "billboard" to me I probably thought you wanted to talk about the Top 40 songs I was listening to on my transistor radio. A big smiley-face sign on Highway 40 of a somewhat shocking 58 year-old rendition of me would not have even crossed my mind. And if you asked me where I'd be in 50 years, I don't think the question would have made any sense. A half a century would have been an almost inconceivable span of time to a 9-year-old. Who could possibly predict what would happen in 50 years? And it might have been pretty much the same way for the founders of our University – would they have ever conceived we would all be here tonight at the Ritz?

Nine years later, when I was 18, it was time for me to decide where to go to college. Not an easy decision. My Dad was a disabled WWII vet. My family lived on veterans benefits. A private university wasn't an option. Going away to a public university wasn't either. Who could afford the room and board? Borrow the money? – that didn't make any sense to our family. How would we ever pay it back?

Fortunately, thanks to the wisdom, the vision, the foresight of our founders, there was a path to college for me. UMSL, just like it was for so many of you in this room, and 85,000 others, was in the right place at the right time for me.

Our founders – for the grand sum of \$250 A semester, gave me the best educational value on the planet. In four years at UMSL:

- I got an education that prepared me for the best law school in the world.
- I got to appreciate what a precious gift education is, with so many of my classmates working night jobs to pay that \$250 bucks.
- I got to play intercollegiate athletics – not quite as well as the superintendent here – but the way it's meant to be – no scholarships, just playing because you liked it.
- And I met my wife to be – asked her out for our first date when she was 18 years old, right outside the Jefferson library, where years later we planted a special tree as part of the campus beautification program. Tree's still there today.

But the really amazing part of all of this is... my experience has been repeated over and over and over again. I know two other stories really well, because my brother and his wife are both UMSL grads. And I know something about Warner Baxter's, and Sandra Van Trease's and George Paz's. Add them all up... 85,000 stories, 85,000 different ways this institution has helped all kinds of people carve a path to a brighter future.

A lot has changed in 50 years. We've gone from transistor radios to boom-boxes to Ipods. The Beatles to Michael Jackson to Lady Gaga! Our University too – from the clubhouse to the quad to the Touhill. But the impact on individual lives hasn't changed at all – except the numbers keep multiplying.

And while the nine-year-old me couldn't conceive of what would happen in another 50 years, the 59-year-old version has a glimpse, and it's a remarkable view: – hundreds of thousands of stories by then, all positively impacted by UMSL. The right university, in the right place, at the right time... for all of them too.

Thank you all so very much.

Tom Minogue
B.A. Economics, 1976