

**Remarks by Steve Crown, President of the Association of American Rhodes Scholars  
50th Anniversary Celebration of Eastman House  
Eastman House  
Oxford  
June 5, 2011**

Hello, my name is Steve Crown, and I am President of the Association of American Rhodes Scholars, sponsors of this event.

Please let me begin my remarks with a few words of thanks:

First, to Professor and Mrs. Fisher for opening what is their home to us for this celebration;

to Balliol College, on whose property we stand: Ms. Joe Roadnight, Domestic Bursar, and Mr. Paul Mulford, Clerk of Works, thank you for your tireless work with our Association in support of the Eastman House;

to Ms. Ruth Kinahan, Senior Personnel Officer, Oxford University, and Secretary to the Eastman Selectors, and to her predecessor, Ms. Judith Muskett;

to former Wardens of Rhodes House, Sir Colin Lucas, Sir Anthony Kenny and Lady Kenny;

to Joyce Knight of the AARS Administrative Office, and Mary Eaton and Karen Meenderink of Rhodes House for arranging the logistics of this celebration;

to Ralph Smith (Administrator of the American Trust for Oxford Administrator) and his amazingly able and generous assistant, Amy Stone;

to the AARS Eastman Professorship Committee, which Mr. Smith guides, especially, AARS Directors William Bardel, John Morrison, and Professor James Basker;

to Nicholas Allard, Secretary to the Association of American Rhodes Scholars;

to the Eastman Professorship electors here with us today, including Dr. Donald Markwell, Warden of Rhodes House, and Elliot Gerson, American Secretary to the Rhodes Trust.

Please join me in welcoming to this celebration, former Eastman Professor, Prof. Mary Carruthers (2005-06).

Thank you, current American Rhodes Scholars in residence, friends and colleagues of Prof. Fisher, for joining in this celebration.

Last, and with *greatest* appreciation on this 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, please join me in recognizing and thanking Lady Williams, who played such an important part in establishing the trajectory for the Eastman House. History reflects that in the original design of the house, Lady Williams assumed with utmost good will and good taste, the role of interior designer, or as she was styled at that time, Director of Furnishings.

I am often reminded, in fact I have a hard time freeing my mind from the thought, especially when listening to others ramble on, that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address took all of 256 words (261 depending on your preferred redaction). That is a high bar.

But I do have a few prepared remarks, beyond my initial expressions of thanks.

The Eastman Professorship is an enduring legacy of one of the most interesting American benefactions to Oxford University.

George Eastman never attended Oxford, but he understood that it has played a unique role in civilization and world history.

In offering to create the professorship, Eastman expressly noted with approval the contribution that Cecil Rhodes had made to furthering knowledge, comprehension and sympathy between the United States and Britain:

**In the long run, cooperation and civilization will, I believe, be most effectively promoted if nations and those who form public opinion in them know and understand one another....In their governmental relations with each other...in their commercial and other contacts, Great Britain and the united States are singularly well fitted to furnish a model and an example of all mankind....**

He continued:

**While I believe that an endowment given in perpetuity should be left as flexible as possible, I suggest that when the regulations governing the professorship are drawn, it be provided ... that the incumbent should be an eminent American selected by a board representative of the University of Oxford and the Association of American Rhodes Scholars... that the appointees should represent different subjects of activities and come from different sections of the country, [and] that the incumbent should regard it as his *special duty to come into contact, formal and informal*, with the groups of students – British, Colonial and American – who are likely to be engaged in significant activities.**

He closed his letter urging creation of this professorship by noting, **“I do not forget that an Oxford experience will be immensely stimulating to the American appointee.”**

So it is that yesterday marked four score and two years from the enactment of the *Oxford University Statute relating to the George Eastman Visiting Professorship*.

From its inception, the Eastman professorship has been affiliated with Balliol College, of which the Professor is a supernumerary Fellow.

Fifty years ago the property on which we stand, Balliol College land, was made available in trust to the Association of American Rhodes Scholars for the construction of an appropriate home for Eastman Professors during their tenure in Oxford. We are deeply indebted to Balliol for that generosity.

Of course the Eastman House is only stone and wood. What makes it live are Eastman Professors and their families. Few professorships can claim a more illustrious line of scholars, including Nobel Prize winners from multiple disciplines. These include, and I might

have missed a few, Linus Pauling (for Chemistry, 1954, and the Peace prize, 1962), Robert Solow (Economics), George Wells Beadle (Medicine), and John Van Vleck (Physics).

The Eastman Professorship is a unique treasure, which we should do all that we can to enhance.

On that note, and as partial explanation for this celebration, I will observe that despite the close connection between the Eastman Professorship and the AARS, in recent years we in the Association and our friends at Oxford have not done all that we might to realize the larger goals of the Eastman Professorship -- assisting greater contributions to civilization and international cooperation by encouraging and assuring, as George Eastman phrased it, **“contact, formal and informal, with the groups of students – British, Colonial and American – who are likely to be engaged in significant activities.”**

It is a sad truth that in recent years this great university’s students, including Rhodes Scholars from America and other parts of the world, could engage in a rich Oxford experience, yet never hear about the Eastman Professors, or ever get a chance to meet them.

Of course, recognizing that there is opportunity to improve the Professorship is not a criticism; it is a challenge to still greater achievement in this sphere.

The Association of American Rhodes Scholars is committed to enhancing the Eastman Professorship, including through active partnership with Rhodes House. While in no way lessening the Professor’s unique ties to Balliol College, we aspire to greater engagement of Eastman Professors with Oxford students; especially, but not limited to, the international Rhodes Community.

As we gather today on these grounds to celebrate 50 years that the Professorship has been based here on Jowett Walk, there can be little doubt that the Professorship has lived up to its founder’s hope of fostering academic exchange and closer bonds between America and Oxford.

I will close my remarks with two excerpts. These are email replies I received from former Eastman Professors who could not join us today. Do keep in mind George Eastman’s special concern when he created his professorship that it lead to closer international bonds and greatly enriching academic experiences:

- *Thank you for the kind invitation to celebrate the anniversary of Eastman House. My wife and I cherish very fond memories of our year in Oxford at Eastman house. It has an additional meaning for us, as we were fortunate enough to use it as a base of operations during the days surrounding the wedding of our daughter to an Oxford man whom she met during our tenure and to whom she was wed in Oxford a few years later.*

Perhaps not the exact bonds George Eastman had in mind, but strong bonds, nonetheless. And:

- *I am truly sorry to miss this. Even apart from the honor, and even apart from the diligence-inspiring and intimidating collection of Eastman Professor books in the library of the house, this was among the greatest experiences of my professional life. The work I did and the book I wrote during that year was better than it would have been anywhere else, largely because of wonderful faculty and Balliol colleagues, superb support in all respects, and the remarkably comfortable, convenient, and elegant accommodations at Eastman House.*

In those words we hear exactly what George Eastman had in mind. What an amazing gift, and what inspiring outcomes!

And so I say to this gathering,

- thank you for what you have contributed, and
- thank you for what you will do to support, engage with, stay in touch with the professorship in the years to come.

You current Rhodes Scholars in the attendance, please remember this occasion and this place as you think back on Oxford. You have come to know the magic that is Oxford. Your opportunity to participate in maintaining and enhancing the Eastman Professorship will increase in the years to come. As your alumni association the Association of American Rhodes Scholars follows your progress here with great pride, tinged with envy, remembering our own experiences at Oxford, and all that those experiences have contributed to our lives after Oxford. Thank you for joining us here today.

And now it is my great pleasure to invite you to join me in toasting the first 50 years of the Eastman House and the future of this magnificent Professorship.

To the Eastman Professorship!

Thank you.