

J. Brian Atwood

Remarks at the memorial service for
Frances Humphrey Howard

November 16, 2002

Good morning. I am here today in my capacity as Dean of the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, but I am also one of many of Frances's friends and admirers. I lived most of my life in Washington, D.C., and most people active in politics or government who lived in that city knew and admired Frances Humphrey Howard.

I am also privileged to call Frances's daughter Ann a friend. And, if it is any solace to you, Ann, and your brother Bill, while we cannot share the pain of losing a mother, many of us share the loss of a great woman.

As others before me have said, Francis loved this place. She saw this Institute as the fitting tribute to her brother. She shared with him a passion for public service and a deep respect for government, especially government that serves the interests of people that society leaves behind.

Frances once told a reporter that she might have enjoyed being elected to office herself but, instead, she heeded her mother's plea to "Help Hubert, instead." And she did help Hubert, crusading with him for civil rights and international understanding, and against hunger and despair. Through her tireless campaign to carry on the ideals that she and her brother shared, Frances was the consummate public citizen. In so many ways, she personifies the public servant we at the Humphrey Institute are entrusted to prepare and encourage.

I spoke with Frances just before she was hospitalized this summer. I hadn't seen her in a few years so I didn't know what to expect as I had heard her health had not been good. It was as if she hadn't skipped a beat. She was enthusiastic about my coming here. She was passionate about the Humphrey Fellows program. She knew the details of all the Institute's

programs and she was hopeful about the future. We talked about our shared service to the U.S. Agency for International Development and her desire to see the Humphrey Institute do more on international development.

I felt blessed to have had that moment with Frances. It was as if she had transferred to me the responsibility of stewardship for this school that she loved so much. I feel imbued with her spirit.

When we celebrate the Institute's 25th anniversary next spring, we will mark our progress with Frances in mind: Are we doing enough to examine and propose solutions to poverty and racial inequality? Are we promoting cooperation across cultures and nations so that we better understand one another? Are we providing a forum where people of varying political ideologies and affiliations can work together for the common good? Are we training young people to have the courage of their convictions to make a difference in the world?

Whatever our response to these questions, I have no doubt Frances would reply: you can do more.

Frances was quoted on her 81st birthday as saying: "Life is action. Only through hope does tomorrow happen." Perhaps the true measure of the Humphrey Institute's success will be if we inspire our students to become "Happy Warriors," just as Frances and Hubert Humphrey were. It is my fervent wish that we will.

Thank you.