AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

FOR

WILLIAM BLANKENSHIP

Hello everyone and thank you all for this year’s wonderful Service Award from the University of Tennessee Development Council. I am humbled by this recognition and there are many I would like to thank, especially all of you. (**If you would like to thank specific members of the Development council or the School President and officers, do so here)**. I would like to take a few moments to extend some special thanks. To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it has been a privilege to work with you as we do whatever we can to insure UT’s ongoing success in continuing to inspire and educate future students. It’s no secret that the University of Tennessee has played an essential role in my life for a very long time and I really would not be **who** I am or **where** I am with regard to my life and career without the foundation I obtained at this great school. I received a first rate college education, learned about the world and what it meant to become an independent young adult who would have to take that education and use it to sustain myself for the rest of my life, and, by the way, I met my wonderful wife, Roberta, who has been the best gift I could ever have expected to receive from my college education!! You might say that the University of Tennessee provided nourishment for my mind, my soul and my heart! Roberta has been by my side since our college days, and she is the embodiment of the benefits of a quality education. She was not only considered to be one of the great “campus beauties” at the time, she had brains and determination that was greatly encouraged at UT. She graduated with a bachelors degree in home economics…. lucky me! … And thanks to her involvement in the cytotechnology Center of UT Health Science Center, she was able to work on cancer research projects at UTHSC. Talk about the difference a person, or people can make thanks to receiving superior education!

I am very proud of Roberta’s work and contribution, and I mention it as means to emphasize the importance of being able to have a quality education. Life was simpler when Roberta and I attended UT, and the world was our oyster when we graduated. Life has changed a lot since those innocent times and although it seems that we are in a world enriched with technology, information and the benefits of modern science, all of these advances demand that future generations have even more tools at hand to deal with life’s challenges. The most important piece of equipment anyone could have is that first rate college education that UT is capable of offering.

Every phase of modern life provides more and more challenges and the competition at every level is growing more fierce every day. In this day and age, tuition and state subsidies account for a mere fraction of the capital needed for this fine school to exist and to attract superior faculty, eager, intelligent and motivated students, and unsurpassed educational and intramural programs. As I said in my opening, I am humbled and happy to accept this award, but this evening, although greatly appreciated, is not so much about me as it is for the students and faculty who will continue to shape UT’s future. Albert Einstein, who apparently knew a thing or two, once said, “The value of a man resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable of receiving.” During my college career at UT, I received the keys to the rest of my life, and those keys unlocked the doors to wisdom, success and appreciation. I have dedicated my resources to giving back those keys to generations of students so that they might have the opportunity to use them to unlock the doors to **their** future and success.

It’s been wonderful to have the chance to get all dressed up in our finery and celebrate the wonderful work of the Development Council. A little acknowledgement goes a long way and I will never forget this one! On behalf of Roberta and myself, we are proud to be UT alumni and we look forward to supporting and encouraging unprecedented growth for future collegians and graduates!

Thank you all!