Welcoming Remarks

Roger Hertog
Master of Ceremony

Robert L. Bartley
(In Memoriam)
Editor Emeritus, The Wall Street Journal
Introduction By
Paul A. Gigot

William F. Buckley Jr.
Editor-At-Large, National Review
Introduction By
David Brooks

Peter M. Flanigan
Founder, Student Sponsor Partners
Director, UBS Securities LLC
Introduction By
John Stossel

Closing Remarks
Dietrich Weismann
Chairman, The Manhattan Institute
Wall Street Journal editor emeritus Robert L. Bartley died at the age of 66 on December 10, 2003. Over his remarkable career of 40 years—30 of them heading the most influential editorial page in the country—he earned a Citation for Excellence from the Overseas Press Club of America, a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor.

The son of a professor of veterinary medicine, Mr. Bartley earned a journalism degree from Iowa State University and a master’s in political science from the University of Wisconsin before joining the Wall Street Journal’s Chicago bureau in 1962. In 1964, Bartley brought his soft-spoken midwestern pragmatism to New York, joining the Journal’s editorial-page staff. He became editor of that page in 1972, editor of the Journal itself in 1979, and a vice president of Dow Jones in 1983.

At the helm of the Journal’s editorial page, Bartley was innovative, principled, and fearless. Breaking new ground, he built an editorial-page staff that gathered its own information, carried out its own reporting, and actually broke news, making his page must reading for American opinion leaders. In so doing, he not only sold newspapers, he revitalized the editorial form—an achievement even his critics recognize. Said one: “Wherever editorial writers take a genuine stand on an issue instead of pondering the complexity of the world for 600 words before recommending further study, you have Bartley to thank.” No newspaperman since Alexander Hamilton has done more to advance America’s political discourse.

Unapologetic in its free-market conservatism, Bartley’s page staked out controversial positions: relentless support of supply-side economics (whose ascendancy he would chronicle in his book, The Seven Fat Years); fierce opposition to arms control and Soviet appeasement; pro-tort reform; anti-tax; pro-school choice—all of them radically counter-cultural ideas for an American journalist of his generation. Political opponents might hurl insults—he would be called a “thug” and a “Stalinist”—but Bartley would not bend.

He believed unwaveringly in America’s promise and in the transformative power of the entrepreneurial spirit. He himself best summarized his career: “What I think I’ve learned over three decades is that in this society, rationality wins out; progress happens, and problems do have solutions.” Robert Bartley shared those lessons with an entire nation.
For 50 years, William F. Buckley Jr. has been New York City’s—and indeed America’s—authoritative conservative voice, living out a career extraordinary in its impact and diversity. He has rightly been called a “national institution.”

At age 29, Buckley founded National Review, a publication that soon gathered a wide and devoted audience attracted to its clear-sighted common sense, uncommon erudition, and urbane wit. The magazine would become the touchstone for modern intellectual conservatism, influencing standard-bearers Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, and mentoring generations of young conservatives. For this remarkable achievement alone, WFB would have earned this evening’s award.

Buckley launched an against-all-hope campaign for the New York mayoralty in 1965, which succeeded in injecting startlingly prescient conservative ideas into the debate: welfare reform, beefed-up law enforcement, tax cuts, balanced budgets. It was not the last debate Buckley would help shape.

As host of Firing Line, which ended its 33-year run in 1999, Buckley piloted vigorous public discussion of the day’s pressing issues. Few will forget the twinkle in Buckley’s eye as he scored a debating point or asked a tough question. Heritage Foundation president Edwin Feulner observes, “Buckley played hardball when Chris Matthews was still playing kickball.” But no matter how contentious the topic, Buckley maintained an unfailingly dignified civility. For Firing Line, Buckley won an Emmy for outstanding achievement and a TV Guide award as television’s best interviewer.

Buckley’s column, “On the Right,” has delighted (and infuriated) readers since 1962, and earned WFB the Best Columnist of the Year honor in 1967. He is the author of more than 45 books in a range of genres, from his insightful God and Man at Yale to his yacht novel Stained Glass to his fictional account of Senator Joseph McCarthy, The Redhunter. His latest book, The Fall of the Berlin Wall, is just out, and yet another book—a literary autobiography, Miles Gone By—will appear this summer.

Buckley has served his country as a presidential appointee to both the USIA Advisory Commission and the United Nations. In recognition of this long and illustrious career as political journalist, novelist, TV pundit, and patriot—of erudition in the service of liberty—William F. Buckley Jr. was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1991.

Peter M. Flanigan is an advisor to the international investment-banking firm UBS Securities LLC. He is, moreover, a venture capitalist in ideas.

Mr. Flanigan was a navy carrier pilot in World War II. He graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University in 1947 and joined Dillon Read & Co. that same year. Like Alexander Hamilton, Flanigan went on to serve his president after fighting for his country: he left Dillon Read in 1960 and 1968 to participate in both of Richard Nixon’s presidential campaigns, and again in 1969 to join the Nixon White House as an advisor on domestic and international economic policy. He returned to Dillon Read in 1975 as managing director, a position he held until 1992. Having been a soldier, a public servant, and a businessman, Flanigan would go on to become one of America’s most creative philanthropists, sowing seeds of educational opportunity in the nation’s most blighted districts.

In 1985, Flanigan founded Student Sponsor Partners, one of the country’s first and largest private voucher programs. SSP targets New York’s most at-risk students—academically struggling minority kids in the city’s worst performing districts (where only a quarter of kids graduate from high school). SSP pairs each child with a sponsor who provides one-on-one academic counseling and who helps pay the student’s tuition at one of 20 private, mostly Catholic, high schools. Their record is astonishing: four of five SSP kids graduate from high school, and nine out of ten of those go on to college. SSP has helped more than 2,600 inner-city students graduate high school, and currently sends 1,500 needy kids to private schools. SSP has helped six other cities across the country create similar programs.

Flanigan’s philanthropy has been a boon to the city’s Catholic schools—a financially struggling system whose performance nonetheless far outstrips that of the public schools, at a mere third of the price. Besides the hundreds of SSP students (less than half of whom are Catholic) whom Flanigan has helped add to Catholic school tuition rolls, he and his wife have adopted St. Ann’s School in Harlem, and, through their Patrons Program, have found sponsors for 47 other Catholic grammar schools.

To research and implement innovative educational programs, Mr. Flanigan co-founded (with Richard Gilder) the Center for Education Innovation at the Manhattan Institute in 1989. He sits on the board of Alliance for School Choice, a national organization promoting publicly funded vouchers. As a trustee of both the Manhattan Institute and the John M. Olin Foundation, he has promoted research and analysis on a wide range of public policy issues—investing in ideas in the public service.
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