

Lenore T. Ealy tribute to Forrest & Ellen McDonald

**on the presentation of
History, On Proper Principles: Essays in Honor of Forrest McDonald
Klugewicz and Ealy, eds.
ISI Books, 2010**

**The Philadelphia Society's 46th National Meeting
April 10, 2011
National Constitution Center**

Most of you probably wonder what on earth Auburn football has to do with our purpose here tonight. In fact, it stands as testimony to the scholarly and personal influence of the man – and the woman-- we are honoring tonight that this Auburn girl could be endeared to the University of Alabama. Despite my good upbringing, I enrolled at the University of Alabama in the fall of 1987 to pursue a master's degree in history. My first semester there, I enrolled in the graduate research and writing class taught by the McDonalds, and I have been a better person—and hopefully a better scholar—for it.

I suspect that the impact that Forrest and Ellen have had on me is similar to that they have had on countless other undergraduates, graduate students, professional colleagues and friends. I can best characterize that influence in terms of three mutually supportive forms: language, learning, and liberty.

1) Language: Through rigorous accountability for vocabulary, grammar and syntax, the McDonalds taught me to love and better use the English language, arguably the true language of liberty. The writing and editing skills I learned from them still serve me well, and I hope are evidenced in the book we are presenting this evening. I confess I'm a bit terrified they will yet find mistakes!

2) Learning: Through example and encouragement the McDonalds taught me the tools and patience of documentary research and gave me the gift of understanding history to be not the movement of ideas and grand theory but to be at its roots the stories of living, breathing human

beings possessing passions, interests, and reason that dance a delicate dance in the circumstances of their times.

To see the American Founding through Forrest's stories of the Founders is to see the well fought fight by men and women of flesh and blood to claim for themselves and their posterity the possibility of self-governance. To see the American story through the McDonald corpus is to appreciate how triumphant and yet fragile our hold on liberty is and to understand that liberty's survival requires us all to aspire to a Constitutional temperament that can hold our own passions, interests, and reason within a proper balance.

3) Liberty: Finally, but I hope without end, the McDonalds have inspired me to appreciate properly the gift of liberty. To have greater gratitude for what each day offers and to participate in trying to hand on to the future something of myself.

Gratitude and generosity are twin supports anchoring the bridge that connects our studies of the past with our hopes for the future.

Gratitude and generosity are twin guidestars that will not fail any man who seeks to live as befitting a free man.

Gratitude and generosity have been hallmarks of Forrest's and Ellen's engagement with students, colleagues, friends, and Presidents.

It is with gratitude that I offer a toast, and also a challenge to all of us to aspire to the philanthropic spirit through which the McDonalds have influenced and profited so many here in the halls of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Society, and far beyond.