

**2003 National Ruby Award Lecture
Galaxy II Conference
Epsilon Sigma Phi Distinguished Ruby Luncheon
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"Leadership for Change"
Dr. Lyla E. (Tomsheck) Houghlum
Dean & Director
Oregon State University Extension Service

I am honored, thrilled, and humbled to accept this prestigious award. I had no idea that I had been nominated, so it came as quite a surprise. I felt humbled and actually somewhat conflicted as I thought about it. I couldn't help but think-what an odd time and space to receive such significant recognition-much like an oxymoron-a bitter/sweet experience. You see, this past year has been the most difficult year of my career. It's been wrenching, hurtful, sad, disappointing, depressing, and very, very difficult.

IÃ, learned that I was to receive this award about the same time I was laying-off people. It resulted in such a clash of emotions for me that it was difficult to process. It also provided however, the incentive that I needed just to go on. We all reach times in our lives when we need something to push us into the next day. This award was that something for me. So, I thank you all very much!

My next thought was wait a minute I have to give a speech??? What kind of an award is this?

Then I thought about the previous winners. These are people that I admire-people that I have looked up to my entire career. They're people like Keith Smith, Milan Rewerts, LeRoy Luft, Walt Walla, Zerle Carpenter, Cindy Noble, Pat Boyle, Pat Borich, Myron Johnsrud, and many more. And then I realized-wait a minute, outside of Keith and Milan, these people are all retired! Actually I think I said something like, "these are all the old guys." How can this be, I'm not an old guy yet! Well maybe we shouldn't go there... Some of the former Ruby Award winners are here in the audience today. I'd like them to please stand up so we can recognize them again.

There are an amazing number of people that I need to thank. Actually, there are an amazing number of people who should be up here with me accepting this award. This kind of an award is never just for individual achievement. It is for the accomplishments of many. So many people have had a profound impact on my life, and I'd like you to meet some of them who are here today. First, it is so special for me that my Mom and Dad, Ethel and Robert Tomsheck are here. In addition my sister Bonnie, and my brothers Darold, Rex, Terry, and Clifton are here. Thank you to each of you for leaving your jobs, your businesses, and your families to be here with me today.

And then there are the people who gave me a chance along the way. There are many of them, but one who is here is Duane Johnson. Duane hired me in my first job at Oregon State University. He gave me a chance. Thank you, Duane.

And yes, there's the most important person in my life-my partner, my confidant, my helper, my coach, my consultant, the person who is willing to be gentle, yet brutally honest with me-my husband Mike Houglum.

What I'd like to do today is talk about how I learned leadership and how it might be applied in a rapidly changing world. So, I'm going to talk a bit about my past and how that helped me develop early leadership skills, then I'm going to talk about what's happening presently in Oregon and across the nation, and then provide some thoughts about leadership for the future in a rapidly changing environment.

One of the things that causes me pause as I stand here before you, is that, I'm just a farm kid...and, I still haven't decided what I want to do when I grow up.

I grew up on a farm in north central Montana-out in never-never land-with my sister and 4 brothers. As the oldest girl I was given a lot of responsibility early in life; responsibility like, cooking for harvest and haying crews, and taking care of younger siblings, among others. The rule at our house was that you had to be 10 years old before you could operate the big farm equipment by yourself (like the big cats and the combines and the big trucks). I remember one morning Dad came upstairs to my room and woke me up. He said that Mom was out of water and all the men were busy (we didn't have water on our farm so had to drive to a spring up in the hills several miles away and haul all of our water back to the farm to be stored in a huge underground cistern), so he said to put on my clothes, come down and eat breakfast and he would teach me how to drive the big truck so I could haul water. Now we're talking about a big tank truck here-it's one with 12 gears, compound gears. So I looked up at him and said, "Ok Dad," and did as he asked. He took me around the block a couple times showing me how to shift gears and how to use the compound feature, then he got out of the truck and said, "off you go, if you aren't back in 2 hours Mom will come looking for you." "Ok Dad," I replied, and off I drove-a 10year old with a giant truck on a mission to get water.

I was a shy kid, but by the time I got into high school I wanted to explore leadership roles. At the beginning of my senior year in high school we all took this battery of aptitude and attitude tests. These were to identify our strengths and provide guidance about our future. During the meeting with my guidance counselor to discuss my test results he looked carefully at my scores and gave me two points of advice. The first thing he said was, "It's too bad you weren't a boy." I remember sitting across the desk from him thinking to myself, "hmm, I'm not sure I can do much about that." The second bit of advice he had for me was, "you'd better not plan to go to college, because you just aren't smart enough, and it would be a waste of your parent's money." Well that really struck me hard, because at our house there was never any discussion about whether or not I would go to college, it was always, "when you go to college" I suddenly felt lost. I told my parents about this advice and at the time they didn't say much, but a couple

days later after school I rode home on the bus, walked up the road and into our house. I found Mom sitting at the kitchen table looking carefully at a whole bunch of report cards. I asked what she was doing and she said, "I'm looking through all of your old report cards to see what you are good at, because I think it's time that we talked about what you might major in when you go to college." This conversation changed my life, because I knew that my parents had confidence in me.

These early experiences helped me build character; they taught me persistence-Dad always said, "you finish what you start." They taught me to work hard; they taught me that things don't always go as planned. I remember when I was lamenting a decision that I'd made, Dad said to me, "you make decisions based on the best information you have at the time the decision is made. Tomorrow or next year you may make a different decision, but it's because you have different information." This was valuable advice that I've used many times throughout my life.

So, again I found someone to give me a chance-I did go to college, and it provided me with a lot of amazing and difference challenges and experiences. I even learned that if I studied hard I really could do well. I learned good technical skills. I discovered Extension. I discovered that I like to teach; that I like variety; that I like a challenge. And after college I found someone who was willing to give me a chance again-the Montana Extension Service hired me as a county agent.

After several years of working I decided that if I was going to stay in Extension I really needed a graduate degree, so I decided to go back to school. I was a nontraditional student for the academic field I had chosen and I had very little academic preparation for study at the graduate level in that field, but again someone was willing to give me a chance-and, I ended up getting the education of a lifetime. I had decided that there were other ways to get more technical skills, but what I really needed were process skills like communication, working with groups, organizational communication and leadership, human resource management, public organization leadership, conflict management, etc. I learned skills that I put to use every day of my life. I learned how important communication is in helping achieve goals. I learned how important listening is, especially during conflict. I learned that messages have both a content part and a feeling part and that you have to be aware of what people are responding to. I learned that all messages include both verbal and non-verbal elements. In fact, research shows that between 60 and 90 percent of everything we communicate is done so non-verbally. We tend however to focus on the verbal-the words-rather than the non-verbal-how the message is delivered and the impact that delivery has on the receiver of the message. Actions like voice inflection, the expression on our face, the way we use our hands, the way we sit or stand all communicate along with the words we choose. The way we use time and the space around us communicates. The form a message takes again communicates-whether it's in the form of a poem, a song, a letter, a face to face conversation, or e-mail. Have you ever noticed how e-mail messages can get messed up? The receiver interprets something that we never intended. I've wondered if this happens because through e-mail some of the non-verbal gets cut out. These skills have

been enormously valuable to me. I use them every day. They are the foundation of my leadership style, and they are essential in times of change.

Change is rampant in our society. At times things change so fast that we feel totally out of control. Some interesting facts about change:

World population: In 1804 the world population was 1 billion people. In 1960 the world population was 3 billion, and by 1999 the world population had increased to 6 billion people. It took us 156 years to go from 1 billion to 3 billion people. It took us 39 years to go from 3 billion to 6 billion people.

Ninety-five percent of the future population increase, beyond replacement level, is in developing nations. At the current rate of growth it is projected that we will have 12 billion people on earth by the year 2050.

At the other end of the spectrum is longevity: in 1950 the life expectancy in poor nations was 40 years; in 1999 life expectancy in poor nations was 61 years. In 1901 the average life expectancy in the US was 47 years; today life expectancy in the rich nations is over 75 years. The United Nations now publishes population categories for people age 80-90, which includes some 59 million people; and for those age 90-100 there are 7.3 million people. This has huge implications for programming.

Let's move now to world knowledge: The total world knowledge doubled from 1750-1900-that's 150 years. By 1965 the total world knowledge doubled in 5 years. It is estimated that by 2020 the total world knowledge will double every 73 days. Again, huge implications for us as we look to the future.

Now on to media: It took radio 30 years to reach an audience of 50 million people. It took television 13 years to reach an audience of 50 million people. It took the internet 4 years to reach an audience of 50 million people.

Every day 7,000 scientific and technical articles are published. Satellites orbiting the globe send enough data to fill 19 million volumes in the Library of Congress every 2 weeks. A high school graduate today has been exposed to more information than their grandparents were in a lifetime. Change is happening at a faster and faster pace. According to an article titled, "Change and Society," "there will be as much change in the next 3 decades as there was in the last 3 centuries." So, the question is, how are we coping? How are we coping with this change in our organizations?

This last couple of years our country faced an economic crisis. This economic crisis has resulted in significant budget reductions and layoffs. How are we coping? There is a book that I'd like to recommend to you titled, *Healing the Wounds: Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations*, by David M. Noer. The author talks about what happens in organizations that go through layoffs; he talks about the impact on those who are "lucky enough" to keep their jobs; about what it's like to see your friends and colleagues leave. He introduces the concept of "survivor sickness"

and talks of the debilitating impact on those who remain. He talks about the need for organizations and their people to grieve; and he states that unless the organization's leaders can express their emotions about the process, the organization cannot move on. Even if new leadership is brought in the organization is unable to move forward unless the top leaders are able to express their emotions.

He goes on in the book to discuss the need for us to run our organization differently in the future. He says that we have created a co-dependence between the employee and the organization that is not healthy for either one. He says that especially in times of change we need to develop a new employment contract, from one of long-term employment to what he calls a "situational employment relationship." This situational employment relationship must have: flexible and portable benefit plans; it must recognize achievements and celebrate departures rather than recognizing and celebrating years of service; that we must remove artificial pay and status distinctions among employee classifications. Noer states that the full time permanent employee will be "a rare and endangered species." He goes on to say, "Organizations that continue to maintain sharp differentiations between employment categories not only cut themselves off from a growing and fresh source of new people and ideas, they put unnecessary barriers in the way of the crucial flexibility they need for future survival."

I have to tell you folks, given the academic environment in which we work, this is tough stuff!

Noer says that leaders must be able to make meaning in times of profound change, and they must be able to master new or neglected competencies in order to be successful. Competencies like transition facilitation, visioning, value congruence, empowerment, self understanding or intrapersonal understanding, process skills, and interpersonal communication skills. He suggests that companies and organizations go through layoffs to get "lean and mean" and often end up "sad and angry" instead, because leaders are not adept at working in a constantly changing environment.

So what does this suggest for us as leaders? Jim Collins in the book titled, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*, talks about "level 5 leaders." He describes the level 5 leader as a study in duality-they must be modest and willful; they are humble and fearless. Using the bus as an analogy for organizations he says that level 5 leaders know how to get the right people on the bus; how to get the wrong people off the bus; and they know where to drive the bus. They seek the truth and are able to confront the brutal facts. They nurture a culture of discipline, and they incorporate technology to advance the organization. They're clear about what Collins call the "hedgehog concept." This concept includes three parts: knowing what the organization is deeply passionate about; knowing what the organization can be the best in world at; and being clear about what drives the organization's economic engine. These are important elements for Extension as we look to the future.

So, is there hope for the future? Yes, absolutely! But like Sniff and Scurry in the book, *Who Moved My Cheese?*, we have to be willing to change. No, we have to enjoy change-and be ready to change again and again!

George McDowell in his book titled, *Land Grant Universities and Extension: Into the 21st Century*, challenges us to be relevant-to be true to the social contract that we in Land Grant Universities have with the people. He challenges us to evolve as the needs of the people evolve, and indicates that there is much work to be done in renewing and fulfilling this social contract.

Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock* says, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and re-learn."

I believe that the most exciting opportunities, challenges, and advances are yet to come!

So, what have I learned about leadership and leaders? I've learned that they must have broad-based support; that they must be able to articulate a vision; that good communication skills are essential. I've learned about the three p's: leaders must be personable, passionate, and persistent. To be successful in today's world, you must be willing to learn-to be a lifelong learner. And yes, to admit that you don't have all the answers.

Max DePree, CEO of Herman Miller said, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you." With that I would like to recognize and thank two more groups. First would all of you who are currently or have served in a national or state professional association leadership role, please stand? Let's recognize and thank them for being willing to step up and move us and our professions forward.

Second, I would like all those from Oregon to please stand up. Let me say thank you from the bottom of my heart. I accept this honor on behalf of all of you. It would not have happened without you. You're the best! Thank you all very much!