

PRESTON S. PARISH

*Oh I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of*

These words, penned by a young British pilot over a half-century ago, speak of the thrill of flight, and of a joyous life that bursts through the mundane – life that strives for excellence rather than mediocrity. Such is the life of Preston S. Parish, himself a pilot, who has topped the windswept heights of virtue and achievement as a businessman, as a community leader, and as a human being.

Mr. Parish was born in Chicago, Illinois, and earned his A.B. degree from Williams College in 1941. During the Second World War, he joined with the First Marine Division at Guadalcanal, New Guinea, New Britain, and Peleliu. He served with distinction, earning the Bronze Star and two Unit Citations. After the war, Mr. Parish began his professional pursuits. The Upjohn Company recognized his talent and hired him as a Production Engineer in 1949. Over the next 35 years, he served as Vice President, Executive Vice President, and eventually Vice Chairman of the Board. He continued to be an active member of the Upjohn Board of Directors until 1991. During his career, Upjohn grew from a privately held American firm to a \$2 billion global maker of life-saving pharmaceuticals, specialty chemicals, polymers, animal-health products, and agricultural seeds.

Mr. Parish has devoted much of his personal and professional energy into our community as well. Over the years, he has actively served on 35 boards and committees, ranging from financial to health care to social to civic to educational, including many outstanding years as a Trustee of Kalamazoo College. Mr. Parish has been a leader in the Kalamazoo Area Academic Achievement Program, seeking to fully realize the learning potential among underprivileged students. He has promoted community interchange and cooperation through the Forum for Kalamazoo County. He has helped elevate the quality of health care locally through the Bronson Health Foundation, Bronson Methodist Hospital and Delano Clinic. And he has broadened our knowledge of flight through the founding of the Kalamazoo Aviation History Museum.

For all his accomplishments, it is not in his nature to proclaim them from the heights. Mr. Parish prefers another litany, one of values that he encourages in every person, and in every enterprise. Integrity. Quality. Respect. Innovation. Excellence. Commitment. He demands that these values be integral to every endeavor. That they also form the fabric of Preston Parish, the man, is no coincidence. That they are intricately woven into the tapestry of his life is a testimony to him, a vital resource to what he does, and a priceless gift to those who know him, work with him, and benefit from his involvements.

In honor of the man, of the values he represents, and of his determination to lift this college and this community to the highest flight, I therefore, on behalf of the trustees and faculty of Kalamazoo College, recommend that upon Preston S. Parish be conferred the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters.

Donald R. Parfet, June 14, 1997