

REMARKS BY PATRICK RICHARDSON TO THE UAH PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 1, 1996 ON THE M. LOUIS SALMON LIBRARY DEDICATION

Mr. Chairman, Dr. Frank Franz, President of UAH, Dr. Judy Franz, First Lady of UAH and of American physicists, members of the UAH President's Council and guests, it is my privilege to speak briefly to you this evening as allies in the cause that I submit is the most worthwhile in this community, the enhancement of its most vital asset, UAH. My subject is a man whose friendship I cherished, a man I was proud to have as my professional colleague, a man I was thankful to have as a leader of my community and fellow supporter of UAH, a man whose life, I think, exemplifies the genius of America and the value of education, particularly higher education, a man who was born in modest circumstance and through his own intellect, his determination and the qualities of his character achieved true distinction and prominence in this community, as far from his place of birth as it is possible to go and yet remain in Alabama.

Maurice Louis Salmon, Jr., "Louis" to his countless friends, who included everybody that knew him, was born August 30, 1923 at Mobile, Alabama. He was reared as an only child after the drowning of a younger brother while playing in a rain-swollen stream. His father was a bookkeeper and his mother, Wertie Williams Salmon, was a registered nurse. Although she had scant formal education prior to nursing training, his mother and father instilled in Louis a love of learning and dedication to education, an unswerving standard of ethics and morality, a thirst for justice, and the highest sense of duty. In this his parents were reinforced by her parents and twelve brothers and sisters, with whom Louis enjoyed

holiday and vacation visits on their family farm in Washington County, near Chatom. Like many rural Southern families of that era, they had more land than money and they developed a corresponding sense of values that they transmitted to Louis.

Louis graduated from Murphy High School of Mobile in 1940 and in the same year enrolled in the School of Commerce and Business Administration of the University of Alabama. He earned the Bachelor of Science degree in 1943, six months after enrolling in the Army Specialized Training Program. He then entered upon active duty with the United States Army Infantry and was assigned to the Officer Candidate School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, where he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant on May 23, 1944 and assigned as Second Platoon Leader, Company I, 262nd Regiment, 66th Division at Camp Rucker, Alabama. His division was shipped to England and from there hurriedly in December to France for combat in the Battle of the Bulge. Louis embarked for Cherburg with his platoon on the Leopoldville, a landing craft. Fortunately, his company was on the deck as they crossed the Channel, in heavy seas. The Leopoldville was torpedoed several miles out of Cherburg. Most of F Company, below deck, were killed by the exploding torpedo. All lifeboats were taken by the Leopoldville crew, leaving Louis and his men to fend for themselves. Louis said later that as he struggled for survival in the frigid, heaving waters of the Channel he thought that his mother would lose another son by drowning. He saved himself by hooking his arm in a net dangling from a passing ship. After several hours in the water he was picked up by a tug. He was landed at Cherburg with pneumonia from the exposure. Only a few days later he was ordered forward into combat with his company.

Although barely 21 years old and just out of college, Louis proved himself to his men as a leader in combat under enemy fire in repeated engagements across France. Their respect for him is attested in numerous letters. He earned field promotions, to First Lieutenant on April 1, 1945 and to Captain before his separation from active duty August 28, 1946, decorated with the Purple Heart and the Combat Infantry Badge. His patriotism continued throughout life. The year of his death, 1993, he said in a speech "I still tear up when I hear the National Anthem sung properly."

After completion of his military service, Louis enrolled in the School of Law of the University of Alabama where he earned membership in the legal honorary fraternity Farrah Order of Juris Prudence, now the national legal honorary fraternity Order of the Coif. He graduated in 1948 with the degree Bachelor of Laws, later replaced with a Juris Doctorate.

Louis left the Law School with a wife, as well as a degree. On June 11, 1948 he married the charming and lovely Elizabeth Echols Watts of Huntsville. They have two children, John Houston Salmon and Margaret Elizabeth Salmon West, and two grandchildren, Ashlyn Elizabeth Salmon and James Louis Salmon.

Following his graduation from Law School, Louis and his bride, best known as "Libba", moved to Mobile where he worked with the Accounting firm of Smith, Dukes & Bucklew until June 1, 1950, when they moved to Huntsville and he entered law practice with Libba's father, Clarence L. Watts, who was a lawyer of long distinction. Subsequently,

Roscoe Roberts, Glenn Manning and Frank Noojin joined the firm, which later merged with the Lange, Simpson, Robinson & Somerville firm of Birmingham. During the greater part of his 43-year career as a lawyer, Louis was senior member of his firm. He served as President of the local Bar Association. Louis achieved prominence in the legal profession, once explained, in part, by his partner Roscoe Roberts who said that he "could accomplish more in an hour than most people could in two or three."

Louis loved and respected the law, and the University of Alabama Law School as well, which he served as a member and President of the Law School Foundation, President of the Law School Alumni Association and General Chairman of the Law School Completion Campaign. He was a member of the University President's Cabinet.

Louis manifested his keen appreciation of the vital importance of education as an economic and social force through long service as a trustee of Randolph School and of the University of Alabama Huntsville Foundation, which he chaired with dedication and distinction from 1986 until his death. He served the Foundation on its Board from its inception, as Research Sites Foundation. His was a vital role in securing for the Foundation tax exempt status under Internal Revenue Code Section 501C3, which made donations to the Foundation tax deductible and thus made possible the merger of Huntsville Industrial Sites into the Foundation, giving to the Foundation an infusion of more than one million dollars in cash capital plus valuable land holdings on Highway 20, South of Norfolk Southern Railway and East of Ziert Road. Louis negotiated for the Foundation purchase

of lands of the late Annie Bradford, which comprise the greater part of Cummings Research Park East developed and sold by the Foundation for a profit of several million dollars inuring to the exclusive benefit of UAH.

During his long - but too short - career in Huntsville, Louis Salmon played a key role in its business and civic arenas and in its spiritual life. He served First Alabama Bank of Huntsville as its Chief Council and member of its Board of Directors from 1973 until his death and its holding company, First Alabama Bank Shares, Inc. as a Director from its organization in 1985 until his death. He served on the Board of Directors of Dunlop Tire Corporation from 1973 until 1985 and from 1987 until his death, its longest-serving outside Director. He was a member of Huntsville Country Club and its President in 1959-60. He was a founding member of the Board of Governors of Huntsville Heritage Club; a member of Huntsville Rotary Club from 1959 until his death and its President in 1965-66. He was a leader of the Alabama Chamber of Commerce, the Alabama Business Council, the Huntsville Industrial Expansion Committee, the Community Advisory Committees to Redstone Arsenal and to Marshall Space Flight Center and of United Way and Boy Scouts of America. He was an active member of the State and County Republican Executive Committees and the Republican candidate for Attorney General of Alabama in 1958. He was an active and dedicated member of the Church of Christ throughout his life time in Huntsville and a principal contributor, financially and personally, in the organization and building of the Twickenham Church of Christ. His community service was acknowledged in the Huntsville Madison County Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Service Award in

1987 and the award of the UAH Doctor of Laws Degree in 1988. His humanitarian contributions and endeavors were recognized in the Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1993, only weeks before his untimely death.

Louis was a lucid and eloquent speaker and writer. He was a warm, good-hearted human being. We who knew and loved him will not soon forget his quick sense of humor, the sparkle of his eye and the friendly grasp of his hand, all shared with many of us the evening of his 70th birthday at the surprise party Libba arranged, only days before his death. Just barely past the Biblical Four Score and Ten Years, Louis left us far too early. His passing was a tragic loss to us, personally, and to this community. He will not only be with us in spirit, however. Because of the generosity of a number of folks here this evening, I am pleased to announce that earlier this week a resolution was prepared and sent to the University of Alabama System Office for action by the Board of Trustees at their December meeting, that, when passed, will name in perpetuity the UAH library in Louis' memory. It is highly fitting that his dedication to learning and to mankind and particularly to the University of Alabama in Huntsville be memorialized in the dedication of its library to his memory.

Here with us this evening are Louis' wife, Libba, and daughter, Mimi. Would you please stand to be recognized?

Several others assumed leadership roles in the effort. Carolyn and John Blue; Libby and Ray Jones; Betsy and Peter Lowe; Linda and Mark Smith, and the Board of the UAH Foundation. Would you please stand and be recognized?