



# Education Was Mccormicks' Life Work

By Senator Dave McCormick

Tomorrow is a special homecoming at Bloomsburg University for the McCormick family. The McCormick Center, named for my dad, James H. McCormick, reopens after a nearly two-year renovation. Our family and our dear friends, the Klingermans, will also pledge a \$1 million scholarship in his and my mom's name — Maryan G. McCormick —which will annually provide 50% of tuition for 10 Pennsylvania students with a focus on public service. It's a fitting tribute to my parents' legacy of service.

I grew up a few hundred feet away from the McCormick building in the president's residence, after Dad was named president of what was then called Bloomsburg State University in 1973. Over 50 years later, I remember the campus like it was yesterday.

The house sits on the upper end of campus on Lightstreet Road. In the early years of his presidency, my dad and mom would regularly walk with my younger brother Doug and me down campus to eat dinner with the kids at the student dining hall. They would say hello to everyone we passed — students, professors, maintenance workers. All received a warm greeting and a welcome conversation.

Doug and I loved these days because the cafeteria had unlimited soft-serve ice cream and chocolate milk. My parents set the tradition because it gave them a chance to see the students' experience firsthand. If we passed trash on the ground, unkempt lawns or dirty restrooms, my dad would call the vice president in charge of the grounds and take him to task. If the food was cold or the dishes dirty, he'd seek out the dining hall manager and give him hell.

Mom and dad believed the grounds had to be beautiful, the food good, the dorms clean and the teachers talented because the students deserved it. They saw it as their job to ensure the school served the students and gave them the best environment in which to learn and realize their dreams.

Looking back, it's hard to imagine dad was only 34 and mom was 31 when he became president. He was serious, tough and relentless. A visionary and change agent. Mom was an equal partner in every way, but she lightened things up with irreverence and warmth. She routinely baked cookies for the men and women on the maintenance crew and working in the power plant. I recall one Halloween when she decorated a refrigerator box and "dressed up" as an outhouse. Doug and I were thrilled. The neighbors were stunned. Dad was horrified.

For both, education was a calling, and they each made it their lives' work. My dad later became the founding chancellor of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. After 18 years of stellar leadership in Pennsylvania, he was recruited to become the chancellor of the Minnesota system.

Mom was a public school teacher, who later pursued and completed a Ph.D. in education at Lehigh University. She initially put it on hold when Doug and I were young then tried again after we had both gone off to West Point. She was delayed again when I deployed to Iraq during the Gulf War, but she bet my dad a pair of earrings she would finish it. She wore those earrings proudly for the remainder of her career, long after she earned them with her doctorate degree in 1994.

My mom once told me, "our future as a nation rests in the quality of the teaching and learning in our schools today." Rarely have those words rung truer.

Our country is experiencing profound technological and cultural change. In such moments, we rely on great universities from Carnegie Mellon to Penn State, from Bucknell to Bloomsburg that give so many students, often the first-generation from their families, a college education. We rely also on technical colleges, community colleges, and K-12 schools that give our children a shot at a brighter future. Most of all, we rely on those like my parents, who commit themselves to mentoring, educating and cultivating the next generation.

We owe them a debt of gratitude. With a servant's heart, they help make the American dream come true.

David McCormick is a graduate of Bloomsburg High School and a United States Senator from Pennsylvania.

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