

Illinois Math and Science Academy

From the Selected Works of Stephanie Pace Marshall, Ph.D.

August 11, 1986

Opening Remarks at the Groundbreaking for the Residence Halls at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

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Val F

LML

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DORMITORY GROUND-BREAKING

IMSA, August 11, 1986

I think I have participated in a lot of ground-breaking ceremonies. In 1968, I watched them dig the first shovel for the creation of Fermilab -- eighteen years ago. You wield a ceremonial shovel and go about your business and before you know it -- a building exists and you say -- "my God, where did the time go?" But it isn't the building that we are breaking ground for today -- it's the institution; the I.M.S.A. and it is here -- within this volume of space, in middle America -- that we will make history -- that legends will be told and retold about how IMSA began -- about how its first class had to rough it -- how primitive were the Macintoshes and IBM PC's and the CRAYS that the students were forced to use -- how easy the science was but how hard it seemed. I think it is crucial that we be very sensitive to the fact that we will be part of legends -- the beginnings of a dramatic evolution of science education -- a response born in the prairie to the alarms sounded in Washington and throughout the nation.

Somewhere in this space over our heads there will soon be walls and cots and desks and computers -- and there will be the students of IMSA and if they are similar to other gifted students they will be discussing the mind boggling problem

assigned in integral calculus or algebraic topology. Others will be playing chess and some of them will be deep in discussions of their concerns about the world. If we do things right -- they will be aware of what we really expect of them -- to be creative ^{scientists} ~~students~~ -- yes. To be superb engineers -- of course. To be brilliant neurosurgeons and research the origins of life and ageing. To advance the technology of Artificial Intelligence and ^Rrobotics -- to help our industries compete in an evermore challenging environment -- all this! But we expect more -- we want to cultivate an awareness of the social and political deeds required of them -- of the fact that our technological civilization grows increasingly vulnerable -- that we have yet to find a cheap, non-polluting source of energy, that our ozone layer is shrinking alarmingly under the impact of fossil fuels, that various vital minerals and ores are becoming more difficult to find and that only 1/4 of the world's population is enjoying the benefits of the technology that produces these problems -- that new diseases like Legionnaires and AIDS keep cropping up to baffle us -- that we live under the constant threat of total world catastrophe in a nuclear war -- and that the only hope of being able to solve these and other awesome problems lies in the creative human mind -- properly nourished, confident, encouraged to let imaginations soar...this is what we are putting in place -- in the space above our heads today. And one day, the future inhabitants of the space here will return to this place as

alumni -- they will be scholars and scientists, engineers and businessmen, musicians and healers, perhaps even politicians. You can be sure they will return because of the seminal experiences they will have had, in this space here -- and seeing them, we will really know what a good thing it is that we did on August 11, 1986 and we will also think -- "my God, where did the time go?"



GROUND BREAKING CEREMONIES

August 11, 1986

12:00 Noon

Welcome and Introductions

James D. Pearson
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Director of IMSA
Stepanie A. Marshall, Ph.D.

Architectural Firm of
Phillips/Swager/Kleb Associates

Mr. Gene Swager

* * * * GROUND BREAKING CEREMONIES * * * *

"A Pioneering Educational Community"

Illinois Mathematics And
Science Academy
1500 West Sullivan Road
Aurora, IL 60506-1339

Thank you Jim.

I feel privileged to be able to add my comments as
Director of this Academy.

Groundbreaking ceremonies are rituals of our culture.
They bring focus to new beginnings and new opportunities.
Today is no exception.

For all of us involved in the dream of this institution,
this morning marks another important step in the
development of a bold new venture in Illinois education.

We are in a very real sense, breaking ground for the
educational development of Illinois' and indeed the
nation's most precious resource - our gifted and talented
youth.

Perhaps you noticed that our Capital Development Board sign
included at our request the phrase

"A pioneering educational community"

There is no doubt in our mind, that the pioneering efforts of the Governor, the Legislature, Dr. Lederman, The Valley Industrial Association, the Corridor Partnership for Excellence in Education and the Academy Board of Trustees will result in the development of the premier educational institution of its kind in the nation.

In a little over three weeks, 29 days to be exact, our 214 students will arrive.

Our commitment is first to them, - to provide an unparalleled academic program and a psychologically and socially nurturing environment.

Our second commitment is to the educational community in Illinois. To them we pledge our resources as a laboratory for educational exploration and innovation - so that we can both collaborate and share what we have learned to ensure that the benefit of the State's commitment to this Academy can be felt throughout Illinois.

It is fitting in many ways that the Academy should be located in Aurora. Ironically, the word Aurora is Latin for DAWN.

It is serendipitious that this is now our home.

In a very real sense we are at the dawn of an enterprise that will evolve into something quite extraordinary for education in Illinois. IMSA is indeed far greater than the sum of its parts.

Interesting, Webster's dictionary defines dawn in two distinct ways:

The first is to begin to appear or develop,

The 2nd, which has the greater significance for the Academy, is to begin to be perceived or understood.

I believe this is what is occurring at IMSA.

People are beginning to understand the professional educational, intellectual, technological and economic

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