

*“Thank you for the courage you have shown by your faith and support of this college through an extraordinary time.”*



In the early sixties, when I was a kid, when John F. Kennedy was president and all the girls reveled in the music of John, Paul, Ringo & George, especially those faint-hearted Americans and Brits who were crooning to a new kind of sound by the British invasion of the Beatles, my parents owned a motel.

I had two favorite jobs at the inn on the edge of the desert of a small southern Utah town on the lazy way to Las Vegas. The first was cleaning the swimming pool.

Every day before I went to school I would help our handyman, Enoch, with the cleaning. We would check the chemicals and scrub the sidewalls, scoop the bugs off the top of the water, and vacuum the grime from the bottom. Saturday, however, it was my job to do alone.

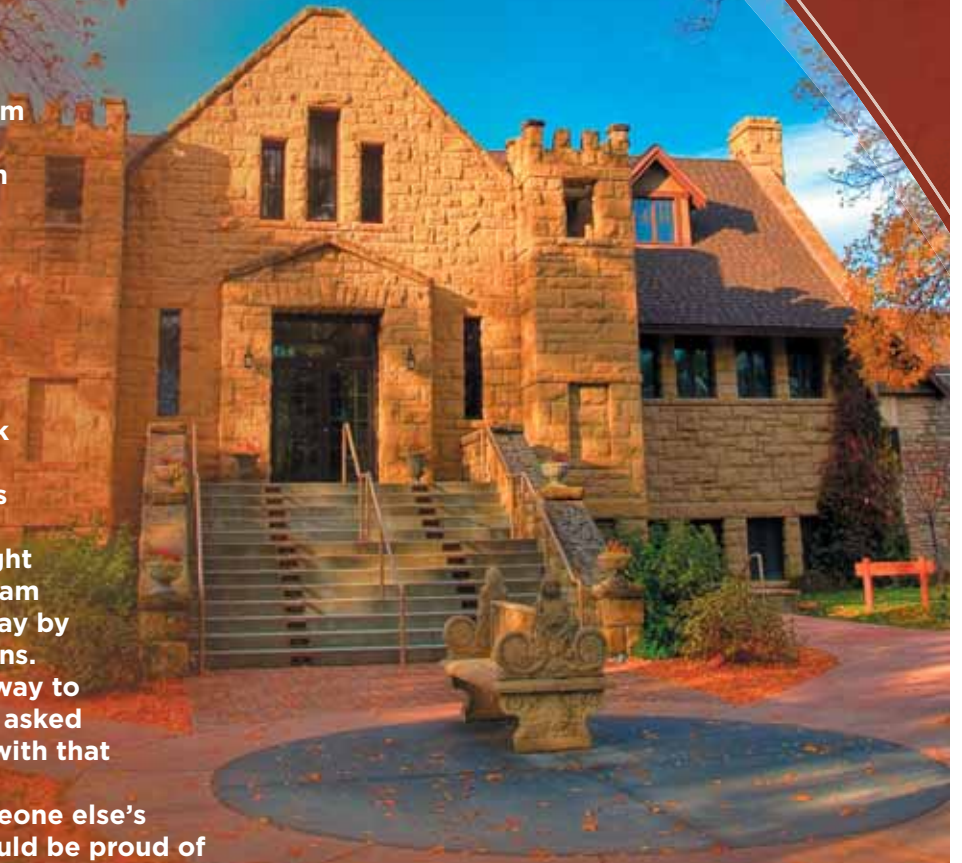
My second and most favorite job at the lodge was cleaning the soda pop bottles left behind by our guests each week. I'd save them all week long and, on Saturday morning, I'd wash them out nice and clean and carry them in a sack to the grocery store not far from the motel so I could return them. I earned two cents for the small ones, three cents for the larger bottles and a whole nickel for the quart-sized containers. Then it was off with my wealth in my pocket to buy my favorite candy and comic books.

I can't remember how much a comic book cost in those days but I'd head for the pool to enjoy the sun with my favorite possessions at the time. I'd get lost in the adventures of Dick Tracy and Batman. I imagined how I might engage in battle with the scoundrels of Gotham City. Right there, by the pool, I was taken away by the fantasy of my own comic book possessions.

One Saturday Enoch stopped me on the way to the store to buy candy and comic books and asked why I didn't do something more productive with that money.

“You could do a lot if you used it for someone else's benefit; you know. The ‘Big Man’ upstairs would be proud of you,” he said.

Well, you can imagine how I looked at him. What? ... Are you nuts?



I had worked hard all week for those little pieces of imagined metropolis fantasies. If I saved them up, one day they would be worth a lot. This was my time to indulge. I was rich and there was no way I was going to give up what I had earned. Here I was, at the precipice of my childhood wealth, challenged to do something for someone else.

Enoch was not an educated man, but that day he said something that I'm sure we have all heard before. Something I never forgot. It's far easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to find his way to help others. I'm sure Enoch was relaying something to me from the Bible. I have fond memories of him. And the lesson stuck.

At Rocky Mountain College, we are so blessed by those who have found their way through the eye of the needle. Their financial support for this institution demonstrates they know the value of helping others. I hear the stories every day. Stories like the day President Small walked out on campus and saw a student shivering in a very light coat in the cold of winter, so he and his wife bought her a new winter coat; or the story of the staff member who asked one student over for Thanksgiving and he brought 15 of his friends. Everyone had enough to eat. Or, the story just this year, when a foreign student who had surgery was invited by one of our staff members to her house to recuperate in the quiet warmth of a Montana home. Or, the faculty and our chaplain who bake cookies for the students. Or, our own students, expressing their desire to help out the poor and homeless with an "Undie Run," a project that collected more than 500 articles of warm clothing for the people who come in need to the Montana Rescue Mission here in Billings.

Closer to home, everywhere I look I see people helping our students with their small needs and their big ones. We are so thankful to you who supported our annual Black Tie Blue Jeans Scholarship Benefit this year. Those financial gifts provide the scholarships so critically needed these days.

We are doing our best to help, too. As the cost of a college education has gone up over the last two years, we've lowered the out-of-pocket cost for our students and their families by 11 percent. We've also done our part by pinching every penny we can. But, more importantly, your financial support has done great things at this institution for our students.

Thanksgiving is our time to give thanks for our many blessings, and those of us at Rocky Mountain College who delight in our students, hear their stories, and share their concerns, are truly thankful for your financial support.

The challenge is great this year, more than ever before. If there was ever a time that you might entertain the idea of a bigger gift, including a little extra addition to your annual giving plans, or a planned gift, Rocky Mountain College would be so grateful. Tax savings might fund much of your gift. For all you do, thank you for your support and good wishes.

You, and all other friends, donors, alumni, staff, and trustees, deserve praise and respect. Thank you for your courage shown in acts of faith and support through an extraordinary time.

Every day as president has been a privilege and I am honored by the trust you and the Board of Trustees have had in me. Thank you for this opportunity to serve the people of Rocky Mountain College.

It now seems timely and appropriate to heed Enoch's sage advice; sell my treasured horde of comic books, and invest their increased worth in Rocky's future, echoing the example of faith, so well expressed by you and others, in Rocky's time proven mission.

Happy Thanksgiving,

  
Michael Mace  
President, Rocky Mountain College

