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Judge Harold Kipling Stubbs: The Brickmason
by J. Clay Smith, Jr."

I am honored to participate in the occasion of the inaugural Harold Kipling Stubbs Humanitarian Award banquet. This evening is more than just a banquet, it is a celebration of the Akron, Ohio Community. This celebration is about a citizen who laid a foundation upon which an indivisible community can proudly and safely stand.

I want to talk about brickmasons tonight and I hope that you will lend me your ear and allow me to develop the theme of how brickmasons lay new foundations.

When I was a college student at Creighton University, I studied Greek, Roman and Egyptian history. Some of my classmates were intrigued by the political speeches of Cicero, and men of Cicero's stature. Cicero and other great orators of that day could stand before throng of thousands and develop a thought from a grain of sand into a mountain of weighty ideas. Other classmates were awed by the gladiators, who strutted before the king in the arena and demonstrated extraordinary dexterity as they defended themselves against voracious lions twice their size and speed. Yet, other classmates preferred the politics at court where

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Ohio, Rev. Andrew K. Newberry, St. Paul A.M.E. Church, presiding.

diplomats sought favors from the king in return for military alliances, and where businessmen negotiated contracts for profit. Yes, Greek, Roman and Egyptian history was a fascinating subject, and indeed, even today, the Gibbons' Fall of the Roman Empire remains a subject of interest among many scholars.

I, too, was intrigued by the conquests of the Roman Legions, the gladiators in the arena, the diplomats who negotiated the balance of power, and the barons of industry. The legionnaires protected the realm and secured new territory, the gladiators, provided entertainment for the public and the barons of industry were always consulted because they funded the gladiators, sold the wine at the amphitheater, and supplied arms to the Roman Legions.

Recognizing the heightened interest of the history class on the matters of state, our history professor asked us to turn the pages of our books the page which contained pictures of the pyramids, those beautifully executed brick and stone structures designed to house the Pharaohs of Egypt. Then the professor posed this question: "What", he asked, "do you think that men and women will remember most about the greatness of Rome, and the Pharaohs?" We, replied, of course, that the world will long remember the Legions of Rome in their smart uniforms and their brilliant military campaigns. We asserted that the great speeches of Cicero would be read in every classroom in the world as an example of his oratorical style and powerful methodology to persuade. Surely, we

thought, that no one would forget the barons of industry, who influenced, perhaps, even more than the kings, the balance of power in the world.

The old professor patiently listened to us as we pontificated with great confidence that our answers were correct. Again, the professor instructed the class to turn our pages to the pictures of great pyramids. The wise professor then asked his second question: "Just who do you think constructed the roads in Rome and Egypt that carried the Legions out of the city to conquest?" He asked yet another question: "Who constructed the amphitheaters in which the thousands of spectators were entertained?" "Who," the professor asked, "built the mansions of the barons of industry?" Silence fell on the classroom. "But why are the brickmason so important?" we asked the Professor. "If you had lived during these days would not you have preferred to be a king, a gladiator or a baron of industry?" The professor had made his point, but it would not become apparent to me until years later that my professor was asking the class to conceptualize the function of a brickmason. The professor answered the question that he had proposed. He said to us--"never forget the brickmasons, who built those beautiful pyramids".

To our professor, the brickmasons were concerned more about nation building than military might and capital gain. The brickmason's mission was to build a foundation to house a

community, to ease access to a neighbor's house, to reduce the agony of citizens climbing a steep hill. The brickmason was a sentinel on watch for the happiness of mankind through the construct of beauty. The professor was trying to teach us that the object of the brickmason was to lay each brick so that the amphitheater would not collapse, so that the Legions would not trip and fall, so that the homes of the barons of industry would be comfortable, so that the citizens would awe the monuments of their ancestors and revere them, and to build a community.

In 1940, Harold Kipling Stubbs' mother and father, Wilfred and Maggie Stubbs, gave the city of Akron, Ohio a brickmason, a builder. While growing up, Harold observed this city in the only way that he could: he observed the Legions, the amphitheaters and the barons of industry. However, he saw no building named for, after and in honor of people of his ancestry, or that he knew. Through The John R. Buchtel High School, he plotted his course ever observing the architecture of the city of Akron that he would reconstruct. Harold kept his plan in mind as he matriculated through Kent State University and Howard University School of Law, where we became close and life long friends. A Pharaoh, Harold was not; a Legionnaire, Harold was not; a Baron of industry, Harold was not. A brickmason, yes, Harold Kipling Stubbs was a brickmason.

From 1966 to 1989, when he departed this life, Harold Kipling Stubbs helped to build this community by example, and by good deeds

driven by his religious faith. While the legions marched, the gladiators played, and the barons grew rich, Harold Stubbs worked, laying bricks and mortar to stabilize a fractured community: a brick here and there for justice, a brick to construct a forum for genuine, authentic dialogue between racial fission in his community. But more.

Judge Stubbs layed a foundation for which and on which we stand and gather tonight to honor six other brickmasons,¹ who will be honored for the laying the bricks for social action, government service, law, education, religion, and business. I salute each of the recipients of the Harold Kipling Stubbs Humanitarian Award.

The real beauty of this occasion is that Harold Stubbs has caused all of the city of Akron to become brickmason. When Councilmen Michael Williams (4th Ward) and Marco Summerville (3rd Ward) recommended, a unanimous city council approved, and Mayor Donald Plusquellic signed into law that the Justice Center be named The Harold Kipling Stubbs Justice Center, it was really the voice of the people declaring that it was time that a son of Akron, a descendent of slaves, become a city father, a brickmason, of Akron,

¹ The following citizens received the first Harold Kipling Stubbs Humanitarian Awards: Thomas Allio (social action), Judge Randolph Baxter (government service), Gary Rosen (law), Barbara Matthews (education), Rev. Ronald Fowler (religion) and Louise Gissendaner (business).

Ohio.²

So let the word go forth-to the Beacon Journal, to The Wall Street Journal, to the wounded hearts and the restless people of the land, to the University of Ohio Law School, to Akron University School of Law, to the Governor of Ohio, to the state legislature, that Akron, Ohio, has entered a new era, not as Pharaohs, not as gladiators, not as barons of industry, but as a city of brickmasons in the tradition of Judge Harold Kipling Stubbs.

In conclusion, I implore us all to join in this celebration and to pick up a brick and lay it on the foundation for racial harmony and equity. Pick up a brick and lay it on the foundation for educational and equal opportunity. Pick up a brick and lay it on the foundation against bigotry and for toleration. Pick up a brick and lay it on the foundation for justice. Pick up a brick and lay it on the foundation, Harold's foundation, the City of Akron, Ohio.

² On February 25, 1991, Ordinance No. 135-1991, was unanimously adopted by the City Council of Akron, Ohio renaming that portion of the city/county Safety Building belonging to the city, The Harold K. Stubbs Justice Center. Ordinance No. 135-1991 was approved by signature of Mayor Donald Plusquellic on February 27, 1991. This is the first public building, except for an educational building, ever named for an African American in Akron, Ohio, and one of the first of its kind in the State of Ohio, if not the first.

Now, turn to the history book to the page on which the Harold Kipling Stubbs Justice Center is shown, and "never forget the brickmasons."