



Vern Schield

Remarks at the Funeral of Vern Schield. August 7, 1993

In the death of Vern Schield, the world has lost one of its most colorful and creative citizens. Vern Schield was a genius. He preferred to call himself a tinkerer. He was a master tinkerer. Or, I suppose, on some occasions to his family and friends, in listening to his latest idea or looking at his most recent gadget, he may have seem the Mad Tinkerer.

Vern had a lifelong passion for understanding how everything works – from nature, to physics, to mathematics – he wanted to know the laws and principles, the theories and processes. Then he would ask “if it works that way here – what would happen if you applied the same principles over there?” That’s what creative genius is all about. From the first drag line to the pendulum – his latest addition to the museum – his mind was searching and probing, mixing and matching, trying out new combinations of ideas and concepts. His feet had begun to shuffle, but Vern’s mind – the mind of a genius – was relentless.

Vern was a genius who learned to keep his balance. Life can be troublesome and tragic for a genius, but life was good for Vern. Life was good because Vern knew who he was. And Vern knew who he was because he always remembered where he was from; where he was from in northwest Iowa and Bremer county where he lived most of his life.

I’m thinking now that it was not just nostalgia that led Vern to repeat time and again the stories of his beginnings – the tough times he and Marge faced when they were first married – reciting verse upon verse of the hard-luck, hard-time songs he and Wilbur sang on their radio show. This was Vern’s way of keeping his balance, for there was this idea, this invention that led in such a dazzling, spectacular way to a prospering business and then to an international enterprise – from farm and quarry in Iowa to almost every nook and cranny in the world. Vern kept his perspective, his balance, his sense of himself and life because he always remembered where he was from. “Hi! Where you from? I’m Vern Schield from Waverly, Iowa.”

There is a special gift that God gives to those who know their roots – those who know who they are and remember where they are from . It’s the gift of freedom – freedom to think creatively, beyond the borders, the edges, the limits, the freedom to wander far and wide, knowing always where home is; the freedom to risk and try new things. Vern had the gift and he wanted to use the gift for the benefit of others. The mind of a genius and the heart of a neighbor – that was Vern. How could he share what he knew and what he had with others? We all know the fruits of his sharing and caring – in this congregation, in our community, at the college, through Self-Help and far beyond. Vern was a kind and generous spirit.

Vern Schield. A genius with an interest in the whole world. A genius who knew who he was and remembered where he was from; a genius with a heart turned towards the interests of others. Vern will be sorely missed in this world and in this community. We thank God for his life among us. Majorie and family, thank your for sharing Vern with us. We pray God’s comfort and peace for your hearts and minds.

Robert Vogel, President. Wartburg College

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