

Carnegie Symposium 24th of May 2019
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Address for Symposium

Welcome to Edith Graf-Litscher, President of the Carnegie-Stiftung für Lebensretter in der Schweiz, welcome to your Board, and a special welcome to his Excellency Edward T. McMullen Jr., Ambassador of the USA in Bern. A warm welcome to everyone.

As you are aware the theme of this symposium is Philanthropy, so it is **extremely** fitting that we speak of my Great Grandfather, Andrew Carnegie. Andrew Carnegie took the concept of Philanthropy to a level never before imagined. In fact, those of us connected to Andrew Carnegie, either by participation in one of the institutions established by his philanthropy, or by blood, proudly think of him as the **Father** of modern philanthropy.

In 1848 at age 13, the young Scottish lad Andrew Carnegie arrived in America with his impoverished family and through his dedication to hard work, a keen sense for identifying opportunity, an innate curiosity, an outgoing and optimistic nature, and a lot of luck he made a fortune. According to history, 53 years later in 1901 he became the world's richest man. However, long before he reached that distinction, he made a promise to himself at age 35, that he would give his fortune away. 30 years after making that personal promise, he embarked on an extraordinary journey and mission- one never before witnessed by human society. When there were no tax incentives, no material or personal gains to be made, he began the deliberate but keenly thoughtful divestiture of his fortune. Why? No one really knows the precise reasons. However, in my opinion, I think there were several compelling ones. First, he had an intimate relationship with poverty. He had walked in those shoes. While walking in those shoes, he had made an important observation- that opportunity and money went hand in hand. He experienced that one's own efforts were a critical ingredient to optimizing opportunity and thereby becoming prosperous. When he had attained a level of wealth that meant he and those for whom he provided, could live comfortably, he clearly began to

feel additional money had to be used for higher purposes. He began to feel that with the gift of wealth came a tremendous burden and responsibility, a moral duty to administer the excess wealth he accumulated, in ways that would benefit others. He began to think that if he could provide money to create opportunity for others, then it would follow that in combination with their **own** efforts, they would use this to better their own lives.

Another reason for the divestiture of his wealth was that Andrew Carnegie was very clear that he did not believe inherited wealth was a good thing, although he did not marry until he was 51 and did not become the parent of his only child, a daughter, until age 61. However, he observed bad behavior and the pursuit of worthless lives by the progeny of some of the other wealthy industrialists and uber-wealthy families of his era. He even went so far as to say, "I would sooner leave my son a curse than the almighty dollar." Perhaps a bit harsh, but clearly this was the way he thought. Thankfully for us, his wife Louise did persuade him that he could not leave his only daughter destitute.

Although his self-promise to give away his fortune seemed to start in his mid-thirties, it would not be acted upon to any **great** degree until he was in his sixties. And then it would define the last 20 years of his life, and his legacy to the world, as he sought out philanthropic opportunities where his money would work to bring about "real and permanent good." However, of critical importance, was that the beneficiaries of his benevolence must also be willing to help themselves. For me the genius of his philanthropy is revealed in his own words:- "In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give to **those**, who **desire** to use the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by alms-giving."

The areas to which he directed the greatest percentage of his bequests were in the areas of education, world peace, scientific discoveries, and the reason that has brought all of us here today- recognizing civilian heroism. Using over **95%** of his wealth he founded a total of 24 institutions, 22 of which are still in existence, and today we are honored by the presence of representatives of a number of those institutions. The dedication of those who are connected to

Carnegie institutions is a tribute to the vision and legacy of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy. Recently I received a letter from Dr. Miguel Roth an astronomer, who amongst his other accomplishments, spent 30 years at the Carnegie Institute of Science. He said, "The spirit and the vision of your Great Grandfather was and is always, present, in the sense of making it possible for the best scientist to carry out their work under the best possible conditions. This was always our guideline at the Observatory." Dr. Roth spoke of understanding and following the "Carnegie Way" at the Institute of Science. Simply translated that means pursuing goals by paving the way to them with excellence. When one commits to doing things right, the height of one's achievements is not restricted. In addition, it means respecting the contributions of each member of a team, working together and mentoring others, sharing the work, and ultimately sharing the successes. I believe Carnegie would have mandated this.

Since its inception 107 years ago, the Swiss Hero Fund has recognized and distinguished 8577 heroes amongst your countrymen. Each of these Swiss citizens has bravely and selflessly risked their life to save fellow human beings here in Switzerland. Over these years more than 3.2 million francs have been paid out for the financial support of family members. What would Andrew Carnegie think of this immense impact his funding of the Carnegie-Stiftung für Lebensretter has had on so many lives in this country? Personally, I think he would be profoundly humbled by the way in which Switzerland has used and honored his philanthropy. I think he would be not a little surprised, but **hugely** surprised and **hugely** pleased. I can imagine his whole being radiating a broad smile, knowing that he had made a really good decision, based on a really good idea he had, and that he was **so absolutely right** that his money would do **so much more good** when given to purposes of "real and permanent good". He would know that the words he wrote and spoke to his contemporaries that they had a moral obligation to put their money to work for others, were proven to be true. He would know that the brilliant example he set for his own peers, and the example followed more and more frequently in today's world by some of our wealthiest individuals, was one of the greatest gifts he left to this world.

In a eulogy to my Great Grandfather written by his friend John Farquharson in 1920, I found some words that I wanted to share and leave you with. "... there are mysterious substances, known to the chemists as 'catalysts', which have such potency that they bring into solution, elements before seemingly insoluble, and yet are themselves apparently unchanged- substances often so infinitesimal in relation to the effects they produce." Andrew Carnegie was one human being, a single life, but "the catalytic, robust, canny spirit of this youth who never grew old, did incomparable, commensurate things on this earth." The gifts he left were gifts born of the alchemy of his personality that touched the spirits and imaginations of men. They were the gifts of a man who **loved** his fellow man and **never** ran out of ideas of how he could give gifts that would bring about **real and permanent good**. In his presence and through his imagination, things were accomplished that no one ever had dreamed of or had conceived of as possibilities, and these achievements not only have continued, but have grown more significant in the 100 years since his passing. I think we might all agree that he has achieved his **greatest** success by achieving his goal of divesting himself of his fortune and leaving his wealth to institutions which continue now into this second century since his passing, to do real and permanent good. Now it is up to all of us to carry forward this way of thinking and acting, and through continued creatively-directed and well-placed philanthropy, **be** the catalysts to bring together the right components to continue to benefit our world and its inhabitants in real and permanently good ways.