Blair-Bedford Central Labor Council
Person of the Year Dinner
September 13, 2012
Remarks of President Tom Foley

I am honored to be on the same dais as your Humanitarian of the Year, Dr. Zane Gates and your Labor Leader of the Year, Ernie Esposito. Someone once said that there are really only two kinds of people—those who want to get things done and those who want to be right. These two leaders get things done for the people most in need in our community—those, as HHH once described them—“those at the dawn of life, those in the shadows of life and those at the twilight of life.”

Ernie—your mother named you well. You are nothing if not earnest, and to the nth degree. Ernie is still out here preaching to us at 8 o’clock at night, even after 60 years on the front lines—fighting on behalf of all who work for a living. And Zane—just remember his words, if you recall nothing else from this dinner tonight. “The value is in the giving, not in the receiving”—that is the lesson of his life and motivation for us all.

I am also honored by the generous words from Judge Smith but want to assure you—especially all my colleagues at Mt Aloysius—that I don’t believe a word of it. The truth is that it is hard to go wrong when you have had such good examples around you all your life.

My grandfather was a farmer in Ireland and a bartender for fifty years in America. My other grandfather worked the railroads and then was a night watchman. My grandmothers both cooked meals for other people’s families. None of them had the benefit of a high school education.

My parents were the epitome of hard workers too. My father worked 37 years on the shop floor at a Honeywell plant, with his two brothers close by to him every day. For much of that time he put in another 20 hours a week at a second job. And my mother knew more about hard labor than all the rest of my ancestors put together—she gave birth to 12 children!!!

Hard to go far wrong with examples like that in front of you. They taught us that there is dignity in any job that is well done. They taught us that there is no substitute for old fashioned elbow grease. And they taught us that the golden rule isn’t just for church—it applies to the workplace as well. Treat others as you yourself would like to be treated.
If I have a single management mantra, that would be it in a nutshell. Don’t ask others to do what you are not willing to do yourself. Don’t subject others to conditions that you would not tolerate yourself. And don’t dare ever stand around in line waiting for the credit, especially not for work that it took a family, or a department, or a work team, or a village to get done.

Finally, I am honored to be in the company of my colleagues from Mt Aloysius here tonight—my bosses on the Board of Trustees, our founders the Sisters of Mercy, my colleagues on the executive council, and my workmates every day in the office, in the classroom, in community service and on the athletic fields.

Whatever we accomplish, at Mt Aloysius we do it together.