We are here tonight for one purpose and one purpose only, which is to pay tribute to the founding father of Control Data.

I understand that when President Reagan heard we were going to honor you, Bill, he decided to steal some of our thunder and called you to the White House yesterday to award you the National Medal of Technology.

I'd like to read the citation you received with that award:

"For his substantial contributions to the development of digital computer technology, leading to the founding of a successful computer and computer services company, and for his innovative application of computers to societal needs, as well as his initiation of cooperative efforts which promise to maintain U.S. competitiveness in microelectronics and computer technology."

I can't tell you how proud that makes all of us to have the whole world recognize the magnificent accomplishments that even we sometimes tend to take for granted. And Jane, I know you and the rest of the family deserve at least half the credit for that medal, and we're just as proud of you as well. And in a little while, Norb Berg is going to present you both with our own version of a National Medal of Technology.
Bill, I want to begin by stating the obvious: It was your vision, your leadership, your entrepreneurial spirit, and above all, your integrity that have made Control Data one of the world's great corporations.

Throughout your career, you have always demonstrated those qualities that are the distinguishing characteristic of greatness in all human endeavor. These are the qualities that have guided us in good times and sustained us in bad. They are the real and enduring legacy of Bill Norris.

Winston Churchill could very well have been talking about you when he said: "The only guide to a man is his conscience; the only shield to his memory is the rectitude and sincerity of his actions. It is very imprudent to walk through life without this shield, because we are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes; but with this shield, however the Fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honour."

You have always marched in the ranks of honor in our company, our industry, our community and our country, and we who have marched with you salute you.
As I said on the day you announced your retirement, it is a great honor and an even greater challenge to be named as your successor, and I never spoke truer words in my life. I also said that it is not easy to follow a legend, and I suspect I haven't even begun to discover how true that is as well.

Since all of us who are here are part of the Control Data family, I want to confess that it hasn't always been easy living up to the high standards that you have set for yourself and all of us. Many years ago, someone asked me what it was like working for Bill Norris, and I said it was a religious experience--it scares the hell out of me. Anyone who has had the privilege of working with you, as all of us in this room have, knows what it feels like to have the Bill Norris blowtorch heating up your posterior.

But as I quickly learned, it was this tremendous drive and determination that made it possible to turn your vision into reality. One of the definitions of genius is a person who aims at something no one else can see--and hits it. You have always seen farther down the road than the rest of us, and have always hit target. Your willingness to take risks and to ignore conventional wisdom and to go where no one else has dared to go has paid off handsomely for Control Data in the past, and will continue to pay off in the future.
There's another name for what I've just described, which is courage. It has been said that courage is rightly esteemed as the most important of all human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all the others.

On a personal note, I want to say that you have taught me there are really only two kinds of bosses in life--those who believe in you and are willing to make an investment in you, and those who just use you for their own benefit. From the day I moved to Minneapolis as director of international operations in 1963, and through all the intervening years, you always permitted me to benefit from your wisdom and experience. Even more important, you always gave me the freedom I needed to make my own mistakes, gain my own experience and learn how to use my best judgment. That is true for all of us here and for all who have worked with you, and that is the mark not only of a great boss but of a great human being as well.

I could go on for the rest of the evening about your achievements, Bill, but I know you don't like to listen to long speeches. Let me conclude by sharing with this audience a few comments from some of the letters you received after your retirement from people who have worked with you and known you over the years and who wanted to express their gratitude and appreciation. They tell far better than I could the profound effect you have had on the lives of so many people.
From an employee:

"I joined Control Data almost 25 years ago and have enjoyed countless benefits of not only a very rewarding career but also a wonderful standard of living for my family. I recognize that none of this would have been possible for me or thousands of other employees without your courage and energy."

From a Minneapolis attorney:

"I think that there are a very few gifted individuals who make the difference in a society, and that you are surely one of them. Courage and innovation and toughness are all too rare, but in combination, they're unstoppable. They are the only source of progress. And I don't know of anyone who's had that combination in clearer abundance than you."

From a former employee:

"You...taught me to challenge the conventional solutions and to try to redefine the problem when the answers weren't behaving properly. My experience with PLATO will always be associated with the most productive and exhilarating time of my working career. I thank you for that opportunity."
From a Peat Marwick executive:

"Your vision and leadership have had an enormous impact on Control Data, as well as on the many other organizations with which you have become associated. Very few leaders can look back on their careers and see a long-lasting contribution to their companies and to society such as the record of accomplishment which you have worked so hard to achieve."

From the mother of a handicapped boy:

"I am writing to express our appreciation for your leadership in educating and hiring the handicapped. Our son was a resident at Courage Center when Control Data first offered computer program training. He was one of the first to graduate and...is employed by Control Data and works at home. Thank you for your vision, which has made employment a reality for many handicapped people."

From a lawyer in Cleveland:

"I would like to thank you for your heroic (and for a long time, lonely) battle against the hostile takeover phenomenon. It is largely your leadership that has awakened the public consciousness to the devastating impact which takeovers have inflicted upon this Nation, her economy and--above all--her people. Please count me among your many admirers."
From the former president and CEO of Texas Instruments:

"You should certainly be proud of what you have done in building Control Data Corporation to the great company that it is today. Your many contributions are well recognized throughout industry."

From two former employees:

"We're writing to thank you for the pleasure of being part of CDC for 22 years. It's a wonderful company to be part of. You made it that way. Good luck in your new venture. P.S. In case you'd like to run for President, you have our vote."

From a Catholic archbishop:

"I have grown year by year in my respect for you. The consistency of your social sense and commitment has left a mark which will last far beyond your lifetime or mine. My business, in part, is to keep people's consciences alert. You have done that in a remarkable way. I have no idea what the day by day judgment of your peers is of you, but you have forced the business community and other communities to take a second look at some assumptions, and that's a powerful contribution to our society."
And finally, from another religious leader, the president of the Mormon Church:

"I wish to commend you for your leadership, praise you for your creativity, and thank you for your friendship. As you know, the word 'pioneer' has a rich place in Mormon history. One of Webster's definitions of a pioneer is: 'One who goes before, showing others the way to follow.' You certainly fit this description. You have left giant footprints in the sands at Control Data and indelible impressions in the lives of all with whom you have served and rubbed shoulders over the years."

No, none of us could say it any better than any of these people did, Bill, so I'll close on this final note: Perhaps the greatest tribute that I or anyone one can pay to you is to say that the great company that you have built will go on as before even though you're not at the helm. It will always be Bill Norris' Control Data.