

A STUDENT FOCUS

President Caine prepares to retire after 16 years

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hen Robin Matthias came to orientation after high school, she'd pretty much decided she didn't want to come to Adrian College. Not only did she think that it would be too expensive, but it was hours away from her home in Indiana. Then she met Dr. Stanley P. Caine.

"He made a bet with me when we were standing in Ritchie Dining Hall," she recalls. "He said that if I came to Adrian I'd like it, that I'd get a great education, and that he'd know who I am. And he said if I did come, to stop by his office and tell him how things were going."

The conversation had a big impact on Robin, and that fall she was attending classes. However, she never made the visit to his office. Little did she know that he'd been following her paperwork. That same semester, he met her parents at a gathering for alumni and friends in Indianapolis and asked them why she never stopped by.

"My parents called me later and said I was in trouble!" Robin said. "So we have this joke where I always say, 'I'm coming to sit on your couch.'"

A lot of students have sat in that big leather couch in his office, to shoot the breeze or draw from Dr. Caine's characteristically steady and contemplative wisdom. By now it's nothing new for Robin, who just finished her junior year at AC. Her involvement on campus and in the community include residence life, starting AC's chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS), and becoming the first AC student to serve on the BBBS Lenawee board of directors. She said he's the reason she felt like AC was the place for her.

"I've had a very good experience at Adrian, and I feel blessed for all the opportunities I've had," she said. "He thinks it's hilarious that it worked out that way. He loves to tell the story, and I turn beet red."

"He comes to everything, plays, sporting events, art exhibits, concerts," Robin said. "It amazes me as busy as I am as a student, and he's the president, and he bumps into people and knows them so well."

On the last day of June, Dr. Caine will retire as president of Adrian College. During his tenure, the financial stability of the College has improved greatly, which includes substantial growth to the institution's endowment. There have also been notable improvements to campus facilities, including technological upgrades, renovations to Dawson Auditorium, a renovation and expansion of Shipman Library that is so complete that the original building is hardly recognizable, and the transformation of what was once Ridge Gymnasium into a modern student center.

"Dr. Caine may be leaving us after 16 years, but his contributions will endure.

"The greatest pride as a president is to see people graduate," he said. "That's what we do here, and we do it well."

There is no doubt that through his leadership Adrian College is better prepared to face the challenges of the future," said Gary Valade, chair of the Adrian College Board of Trustees. "The College is not only stronger academically and admin-

istratively, but also financially, with an endowment now approaching \$40 million."

According to Valade, though, the best way to characterize Dr. Caine's presidency is that it's been student-centered. Ask Dr. Caine about what's been accomplished since 1989, and he'll talk about shaking hands with approximately 3,000 graduates at commencement.

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If Dr. Caine is comfortable around students, it shouldn't be a big surprise. Both of his parents were educators, and his father eventually became president of

Illinois College in Jacksonville, Ill. He grew up around education, and spent his entire career working with it.

"Since the age of two, I've always been on a college campus," Dr. Caine said. "I never left."



Improvements to campus during Dr. Caine's presidency include the completion of the Merillat Sport & Fitness Center, as well as major renovations to Shipman Library and the student center. But he lists his main accomplishment as shaking hands with approximately 3,000 graduates.

"My parents believed that education was the most important benefit that anyone could obtain," he said. "They believed in the idea that being a teacher is a noble thing."

It was Dr. Caine's love of history that hooked him on education. He studied it as an undergraduate at Macalester College (St. Paul, Minn.), and later during his graduate work at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, where he received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and won a prize for a book he wrote, "The Myth of a Progressive Reform" (The State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

His first teaching job was at Lindenwood College (St. Charles, Mo., now Lindenwood University), and then at DePauw University (Greencastle, Ind.). Although he'd never really planned to go into administration, it was at DePauw that he got his first taste of it, when he filled in as acting assistant dean of the university and director of graduate studies before going back to teaching.

Soon after, the president of Hanover College (Hanover, Ind.) approached him about an administrative position. He eventually agreed, on the condition that he could keep teaching. He spent the next 12 years as vice president for academic affairs there, with teaching on the side.

Colleges began expressing interest in Dr. Caine as a presidential candidate. Eventually, a search consultant per-

sueded him to apply at Adrian, and soon after he got a phone call.

"About 16 years ago, I picked up the phone and a voice said, 'This is Frank Dick [AC trustee], calling from Adrian, Mich., the most beautiful place in the world,'" Dr. Caine said. "I think my response was, 'Is it really?' But I will have to say looking back on that conversation, he was on the right track.

"Serving as Adrian's president has been the most challenging and the most satisfying portion of my professional career."

He admits that it's a hard job. He has had to be willing to handle any type of problem, at any time of day or night.

"Literally, the buck does stop in the president's office," he said.

On top of that, prioritizing is a constant struggle, because a president is pulled in so many directions. He has to balance his role in the affairs of campus with fundraising trips around the country, with a need to communicate effectively about the College with not only thousands of alumni, but also with the general public,

and to not only represent the College with outside organizations, but to fulfill what he sees as a presidential duty to influence the overall course of higher education.

"I don't think people always understand the relationship between the internal and external," he said. "Partly because it's part of our mission to accept students of modest means, we need federal and state aid. That's one of the reasons I spend so much time on public policy, because it matters a lot to our students, and to the health of this institution."

With so many areas to cover, the president puts in a lot of hours.

"When he comes home at night, it's more of a question of just changing where he's working," his wife Karen said. "He often goes in his study; he does what he has to do."

"I've loved doing it; it suits me," Dr. Caine said. "I don't mind being involved on a 24-hour basis. And there are all kinds of privileges associated with being president. You're probably treated

with more respect than you deserve. You get to work with interesting people, and to travel. I've lived a very interesting life."

One aspect of Dr. Caine's presidency that might not be obvious to most people on campus is his influence around the state and nation. He has been a significant player in a number of state and national organizations that involve higher education, including the National Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities of The United Methodist Church, Michigan Campus Compact, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and has been involved in a variety of significant ways with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

The fact that he's a well-known leader was never more evident than at his retirement dinner in April. The speakers kept making the same two observations about him. One is that if you go to a sporting event or walk around campus with him, he knows all about every student he sees. The other is that if you move around in higher education circles,



Karen and Stan Caine

In the late 1950s, the football team for Jacksonville High School in Jacksonville, Ill., took on Springfield Cathedral in the biggest game of the season. Both teams were undefeated, and Jacksonville led 7-6. A Cathedral pass down the field was intercepted by a player on the defense, but it was called back on a penalty. Cathedral ran a screen play to an all-state halfback and things didn't look good, until the same Jacksonville player appeared to make the legendary tackle that won the game.

That player was none other than Stan

around at the time, you'll hear that story," David said.

Dr. Caine is also an excellent tennis player. He helped put himself through grad school by working summers as a tennis pro at a country club, and has had some success as a ranked tournament player. David and his two sisters, Rebecca and Kathryn, remember when he took on someone on the men's tennis team shortly after coming to AC.

"The president is around 50 and he says, 'I'd like to play tennis with you.' So the student says, 'All right, let's humor the president.' He absolutely

crushed him," David said.

"Students tend to underestimate his tennis ability," Dr. Caine's wife Karen said. Karen, who coached the AC women's tennis team for 15 years, is purported to be one of the best tennis players in the area, and has been an excellent player going back at least to college.

"Mom and Dad play mixed doubles with people who don't know what they have coming to them," Rebecca said. "With Mom's brutal serve and backhand, and Dad's consistency in getting to every ball, it's just impossible."

Tennis is how the two met.

"There was a big dance on campus, and I wasn't going to it," Dr. Caine said. "I think my roommates or something dared me to ask her, not to go to the dance, but to play tennis with me. I suppose that was a date — I think that was a date.

"So I met my wife on the tennis court. Tennis has been good to me. And we've been playing beside each other ever since."

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people will eventually ask you, “Do you know Stan Caine? He’s a good man.”

Sheila Kovalchik, former commissioner of the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association, remembers Dr. Caine was somewhat uncertain when she nominated him to his first leadership role with the NCAA.

“The year of his first term with that organization, I flew back from the convention and happened to be sitting next to the then-assistant chief of staff of NCAA Div. III, and she said, ‘Stan Caine has a steeper learning curve than any college president I’ve worked with.’”

According to Kovalchik, he went from

“Being president is definitely an exercise in humility,” he said. “Presidents can do very little – literally nothing – on their own.”

Dr. Caine gives credit to an excellent faculty committed to teaching, a dedicated staff, an unusually wise and generous group of trustees, and alumni who understand what AC has meant to them. It’s all in keeping with the long and proud tradition here.

“For almost 150 years, Adrian has produced graduates who have provided significant service to society, productive citizens that take pride in their institution. That’s a long history, and one of the first

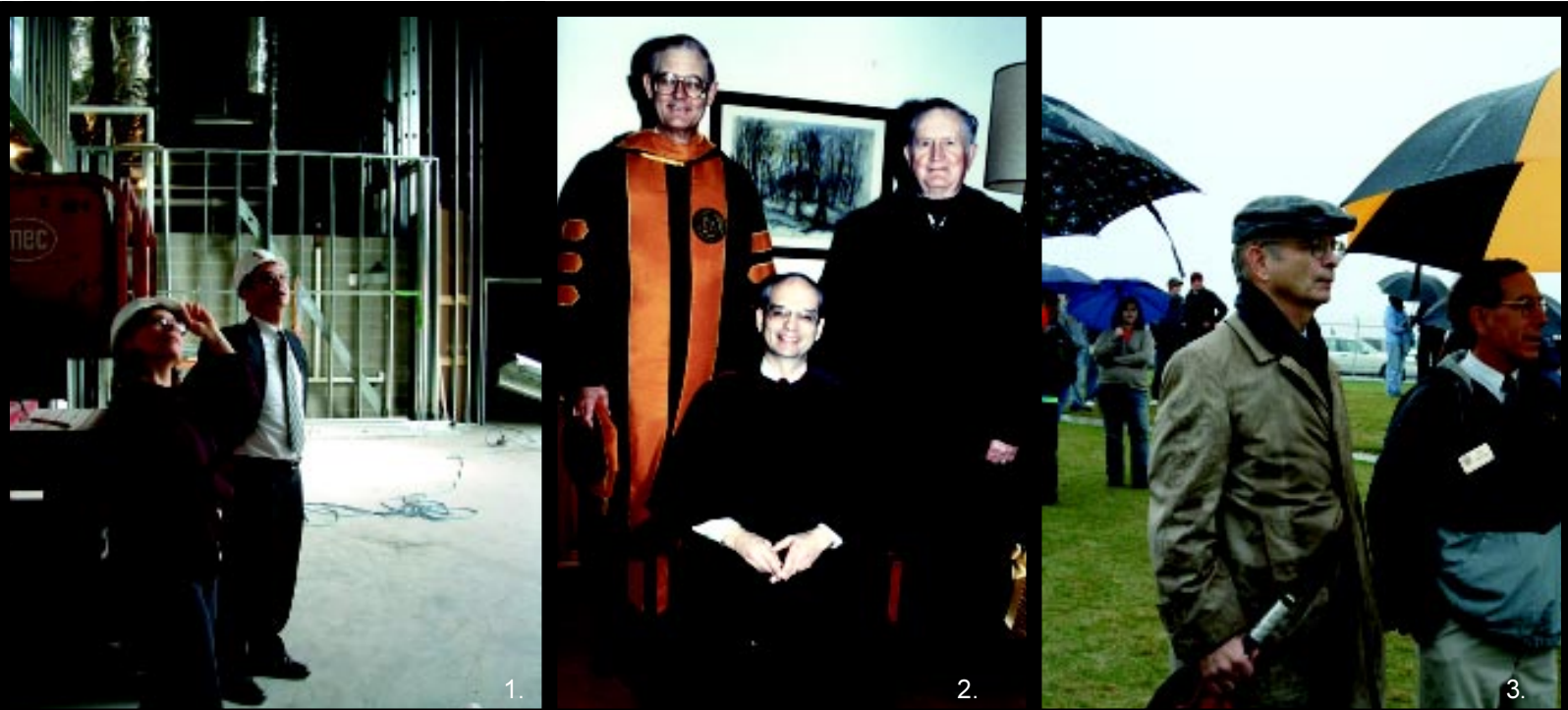
and maybe write.

“It will be nice to set my own pace,” he said. “Right now, from the time I wake up basically other people dictate what I’m going to do. You think you have control of your life, but you don’t.

“And I’ve traveled a lot, but it’s always related to business. I go to meetings, and my wife goes to museums. I want to go to museums.”

Soon the Caines will move out of the president’s house. About a year ago, they bought a house in Adrian, the first home they’ve owned in 28 years.

“We’re looking forward to having our own place,” Dr. Caine said. “Don’t get me



1. Dr. Caine watches the progress of construction in the student center, which was recently named in his honor (see page 4). 2. Caine with former AC presidents Don Stanton (1979-89), left, and John Dawson (1955-78). His 16 years is unusually long for a president; the three together span a remarkable five decades. 3. Caine at last year’s Homecoming football game. He is renowned for attending campus events, and for knowing all the students involved.

being uncertain to being the “absolute most-respected college president in Division III.”

Kovalchik attested that he is skillful at making everyone feel heard, and creating consensus.

“In the 14 years that I’ve been associated with that conference, when Stan Caine speaks on the side of an issue, I can never remember that issue going any way other than the way that Stan believed in,” she said. “It’s an indication of the respect that people have for him.”

To Dr. Caine, though, his job has been a lesson in how dependent a president is on the good people around him.

things you realize as president is that you dare not fail.

“We continue to be an institution that takes seriously the issue of providing a quality undergraduate education to talented students, no matter what their means,” he continued. “There are a lot of institutions where it’s very difficult for students without means to attend.”

When a person is so immersed in a task, it’s hard to imagine what he’ll do when he’s done. However, Dr. Caine has some ideas about retirement. For one thing, he’s got seven grandkids he’ll have more time with. And he’s looking forward to contemplation, for chances to read

wrong, the president’s house is a great house, but it’s not our own.”

When Dr. Caine retires on June 30, he knows the College will be in good hands with the new president, Dr. Jeffrey Docking.

“He understands The United Methodist Church, he understands small colleges, he even knows Michigan,” Dr. Caine said. “He has the skills and abilities to move this college forward.”

Read more about Docking in the next issue, for part two of “Adrian at the Turning Point.”