

SPEECH BY C.G.KING AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE  
C.GORDON KING CENTRE ON SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1995

THIS IS A MOMENTOUS OCCASION, A HAPPY OCCASION AND AN HISTORICAL OCCASION FOR THE TOWN OF COBOURG. SEVENTEEN MONTHS AND SEVENTEEN DAYS AGO THE THEN MAYOR, ANGUS V.READ AND I SET SHOE TO SHOVEL AND TURNED THE FIRST SOD FOR A FUTURE ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY BUILDING. ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY-SEVEN YEARS AGO OUR FIRST RECORDED CITIZEN, ELIUD NICKERSON PUT UP HIS SHACK AT THE LATER FOUR CORNERS: AND NOW UNDER THE REGIME OF JOAN CHALOVICH AS MAYOR WE CELEBRATE THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF A BRAND NEW LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CENTRE AT THE FIVE CORNERS. THE YEARS BETWEEN HAVE SEEN TREMENDOUS CHANGES IN THE FUNCTION OF A LIBRARY BUT BASICALLY IT REMAINS THE SAME, A PLACE FOR ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S LITERATURE AND KNOWLEDGE.

EARLY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY LOCAL CITIZENS OF COBOURG SET UP A MECHANICS INSTITUTE WHERE ANYONE, NOT NECESSARILY A MECHANIC, HAD ACCESS TO BOOKS AND PERIODICALS OF THE TIME. IN 1895 THESE INSTITUTES CAME UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE PROVINCIAL LIBRARY ACT. HERE IN COBOURG THE NAME PUBLIC LIBRARY WAS USED BUT THE TOWN COUNCIL HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ITS OPERATION. IT WAS KEPT OPERATING BY A GROUP OF PUBLIC-SPIRITED CITIZENS WHOSE MAIN SOURCE OF REVENUE WAS A MEMBERSHIP FEE OF ONE DOLLAR A YEAR. THIS LIBRARY WAS LOCATED IN WHAT IS NOW TUGG'S FURNITURE EMPORIUM WHERE IT EXISTED UNTIL 1964. IT HAD SUFFERED THE MISFORTUNE OF A FIRE IN 1899 AND A FLOOD IN 1918 FROM A BROKEN PIPE IN THE COLLEGIATE'S DOMESTIC SCIENCE ROOM UPSTAIRS. THE FIRE CAUSED THE LOSS OF MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS WORTH OF BOOKS: THE FLOOD RUINED THE WHOLE CARD INDEX SYSTEM AND MANY BOOKS TOO. ANOTHER BLOW WAS THE REFUSAL OF TOWN COUNCIL TO TAKE A CARNEGIE GRANT IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THIS CENTURY. THE ASSOCIATION KEPT THE LIBRARY OPERATING, AND THEIR PERSEVERENCE BORE FRUIT. IN 1957 A DAMNING REPORT ON THE LIBRARY BY MR.ANGUS MOWAT, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY DIRECTOR, AND A



PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL BY THE LATE VICTOR CLIMO AND HARRY DEYMAN RESULTED IN THE TOWN TAKING OVER THE LIBRARY AND MAKING IT A FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY. THE FIRST BOARD HAD FOUR PERSONS REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL, HARRY DEYMAN (CHAIRMAN), MAYOR JACK BURNET, MRS. JANE FIELD, AND C. GORDON KING: REPRESENTING THE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD WERE MRS. CHRISTINE GARDINER, MRS. AMELIA LAWSON AND MR. GRANT SINE: REPRESENTING THE SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD WERE MRS. LOIS ANN VERNEY AND MR. ALAN J. McCONVEY. THEY HELD THEIR FIRST MEETING OCTOBER 1ST, 1958.

THE FOLLOWING MAY THE BOARD ENGAGED THE SERVICES OF MR. GRAHAM BARNETT M.A. (EDINBURGH) AS CHIEF LIBRARIAN. HERE I CAN SAY WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIS EXPERTISE AND KNOWLEDGE THAT OUR COBOURG PUBLIC LIBRARY BECAME A PROFESSIONAL OPERATION. ALSO HIS ADVOCACY OF THE FORMATION OF AN ART GALLERY AUXILIARY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ART GALLERY OF NORTHUMBERLAND. AT THIS TIME I WOULD LIKE TO SAY HOW SORRY I AM THAT MY DEAR FRIEND AND FORMER COLLEAGUE, CHARLES ALBERT HAGEN, HAS RECENTLY BEEN TAKEN FROM US. HE WAS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF A NEW LIBRARY, HAD DEVOTED MUCH TIME AND ENERGY TO THE ART GALLERY AUXILIARY AND LED IT INTO ITS FINAL STAGE WHEREBY IT BECAME THE ART GALLERY OF NORTHUMBERLAND AND A NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE. MAY HIS SPIRIT BE WITH US TODAY.

THE HORRIBLE WORKING CONDITIONS AT THE KING STREET SITE AND A RAPIDLY EXPANDING POPULATION WERE FACTORS IN PERSUADING THE TOWN COUNCIL TO ACQUIRE THE VACANT SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING OF THE UNITED CHURCH TO HOUSE THE RAPIDLY GROWING NEEDS. THE SUMMER OF 1964 SAW THE MOVE FROM KING TO CHAPEL ST. WHERE FOR 31 YEARS THE LIBRARY HAS SERVED THE NEEDS OF THE YOUNG AND OLDER POPULATION OF THE TOWN AND SURROUNDING AREA UNTIL AN EVER EXPANDING POPULATION AND EXPLOSION OF KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY HAVE RESULTED IN THIS MAGNIFICENT BUILDING. TODAY UNDER THE CAPABLE AND EFFICIENT LEADERSHIP OF CHIEF LIBRARIAN VALERIE SCOTT IT OFFERS A WIDE SPECTRUM OF FACILITIES. BESIDES REGULAR BOOKS YOU CAN GET THOSE THAT TALK ON TAPE, VIDEO TAPES, MUSIC FROM THE CLASSICS TO ROCK,



ELECTRONIC CATALOGUING, INTER LIBRARY LOANS, CHILDREN'S LIBRARY AND PLAY AREA AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ARCHIVES A CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DISPLAY OF HISTORICAL MATERIAL.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE NEW BUILDING BEGAN AS FAR BACK AS 1986 BUT FINALLY INTENSIFIED IN 1991 WHEN THE TOWN COUNCIL STIPULATED THAT THE COBOURG PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD CURRENTLY CHAIRED BY MR. BILL McDONALD MUST PROVIDE THE AMOUNT OF \$500,000 TOWARDS THE FUNDING, THE REMAINDER BEING PROVIDED BY THE PROVINCE AND TOWN. THE BOARD RECEIVED IMMEDIATE SUPPORT FROM A GROUP OF PUBLIC SPIRITED CITIZENS WHO ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE. WITH THE SLOGAN "BUILDING FOR TOMORROW" THEY FORMED THE COBOURG PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF MR. JAFF ROLPH, ABLY BACKED BY VICE CHAIRS BOB MacCOUBREY AND MIKE IRWIN, WITH ELAINE ELLIOTT AS CHAIRLADY OF THE SPECIAL EVENTS. FORMER TOWN COUNCILLOR GILBERT BROCANIER HEADED THE BUILDING COMMITTEE. I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION MANY MORE NAMES BUT REFRAIN IN FEAR OF MISSING SOME. WHAT A WEE OF CANVASSERS THEY INITIATED! ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS OVERWHELMINGLY RESPONDED AND REACHED THE GOAL WITH OVER TWO-THIRDS BEING IN CASH, THE BALANCE IN PLEDGES TO BRING THE TOTAL TO OVER HALF A MILLION. OUR LIBRARY IS EVEN SELLING PROPERTY FOR A LOCAL PAPER RECENTLY RAN AN AD FOR A HOUSE USING THE WORDS "NEAR THE NEW LIBRARY".

LAST YEAR I WAS OVERWHELMED YET THRILLED WHEN A COMMITTEE OF LOCAL CITIZENS VISITED ME TO SAY THEY WOULD LIKE THE NEW LIBRARY TO BEAR MY NAME IF I SHOULD ACQUIESCE. IT WAS WITH A FEELING OF DEEP APPRECIATION THAT I ACCEPTED THIS HONOUR, YET IT WAS WITH A PROFOUND SENSE OF HUMILITY AS I THOUGHT OF OTHERS DESERVING SOME MARK OF RECOGNITION TOO. SO AT THIS TIME I WISH TO THANK YOU FROM THE VERY DEPTHS OF MY HEART.

PERHAPS YOU ARE WONDERING WHAT MY CONNECTION WITH THE LIBRARY AND MY INTEREST IN IT HAVE BEEN. I CAME ON THE ASSOCIATION BOARD IN 1955 AND EXCEPT FOR A SHORT TERM OFF IN THE 1960'S SERVED UNTIL 1978, SEVERAL YEARS AS CHAIRMAN. DURING AND AFTER MY YEARS ON THE COLLEGIATE STAFF I HAVE MADE MUCH USE OF THE LIBRARY FACILITIES. A PROPOS OF MY NAME BEING



ON THE BUILDING I WAS BROUGHT UP SHORT ONE DAY RECENTLY WHEN ONE OF THE LADIES ON DUTY IN THE OLD LIBRARY TOLD ME A PERSON IN FOR BOOKS SAID TO HER "WHO IS THIS GORDON KING ANYWAY?" SHE ENLIGHTENED HIM BUT IT MADE ME THINK OF THE LATIN PHRASE "SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI" - SO PASSES FAME IN THIS WORLD - HERE TODAY GONE TOMORROW. YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ANOTHER TRANSLATION "GLORIA IS ALWAYS SICK ON MONDAYS". ON ANOTHER OCCASION RECENTLY A FORMER STUDENT TOLD ME THE SIGN ON THE NEW LIBRARY WAS NOT COMPLETE, SO I ROSE TO THE BAIT AND SAID "WHY?" AND HE SAID THERE SHOULD BE SOME LATIN UNDER THE NAME, SO I SAID "HOW ABOUT 'DIU VIVAT'?" - LONG MAY HE LIVE.

TO BRING THIS ORATION TO A CLOSE I FORECAST THAT EVEN AS THE OLD LIBRARY SERVED THIS COMMUNITY FOR 31 YEARS, SO THIS BRAND NEW ONE WILL SERVE MANY MORE, WELL INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

I WISH TO THANK ALL OF YOU MOST SINCERELY FOR THE SPECIAL HONOUR YOU HAVE BESTOWED ON ME. IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE AND A DELIGHT TO HAVE SERVED YOU AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY FOR THE PAST SIXTY YEARS. THEREFORE FOR THE C.GORDON KING CENTRE I SAY "DIU FLOREAT" - LONG MAY IT FLOURISH.