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MARION ROSS MCDANIEL: A PORTRAIT IN LEADERSHIP

by

Donald A. Offermann

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty  
of the Graduate School of Loyola University of Chicago  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May

1990



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the special assistance given to him by Professor Max Bailey, Ed.D., and Professor Joan Smith, Ph.D., who co-directed the research and the writing of this dissertation, and that of Professor Phil Carlin, Ed.D., who served with them on the Dissertation Committee. Without their counsel and encouragement, this project would not have progressed with the efficiency that it did.

The author also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Tom Braatz of the Oak Park and River Forest High School staff who patiently guided the "Word Perfect" processing of this manuscript. And there were those who made significant sacrifices for this dissertation, especially the author's wife Verna who for the year of research and writing continually reminded him that the project had to come first and that other family activities would have to be deferred. Without her patience, encouragement, and understanding, this dissertation could never have been completed. He also wishes to acknowledge the good will of his children Daniel, Nancy, David, and Monika, who far too often saw him retreat to his office to press on with the dissertation work.



## VITA

The author, Donald Allen Offermann, is the son of Rev. Theodore Henry Offermann (deceased) and Viola (Binder) Offermann. He was born April 29, 1937, in Red Bud, Illinois.

He graduated as salutatorian of the Lockwood High School, Lockwood, Missouri, class of 1954. In 1958 he received his B.S. degree in education from Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois. In 1958 and 1959 he pursued studies in English language and literature at the University of Chicago. He became a graduate student in English language and literature at Loyola University of Chicago in 1961 and received the A.M. degree in January 1965. In 1966 he was awarded an NDEA Fellowship to study linguistics and rhetoric at North Texas State University and in 1973 he was awarded a John Hay Fellowship in the Humanities to study at Bennington College (Vermont). In 1981 he completed a program at DePaul University for certification as an administrator in the State of Illinois.

He has worked all of his professional life in the field of education. From 1958-1964 he taught English at Luther High School North (Chicago), serving as Department Chair for three of those years; from 1964 to the present, he

has been on the staff of Oak Park and River Forest High School (Illinois), where he was a teacher of English, Assistant Department Chair and Department Chair in English, Associate Principal for Instruction, and where he currently is the Assistant Superintendent for Academic Affairs. He has been a speaker at a variety of conferences at the local, state, and national level, and he has chaired various committees and task forces including a NCTE committee for promoting student growth through the reading of literature and an ASCD task force to study the effects of increased graduation requirements for high school students. He served on the United States Department of Education Selection Panel for the "Three C's" program and for National Diffusion Network Projects. For four years he served on the selection panel for National Endowment in the Humanities Programs. In 1985 he was recognized by the University of Chicago and DePaul University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa for "outstanding contributions to education" and in the same year he was listed in *Who's Who in the Midwest*.

His publications include the following:

*With Consequences for All* (Collaborative Author),  
published as a monograph by ASCD, 1985.

"Designing a General Education Curriculum for Today's  
High School Student," *Educational Leadership*,  
March 1984.

"The Assistant Principalship," a chapter in *The Making of a Principal*, Thomas Press, 1984.

"Literature: Not for Entertainment Only," *Illinois English Bulletin*, Spring 1977.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iii
VITA . . . . .	iv
Chapter	
I. TO HONOR A PRINCIPAL . . . . .	1
II. THE MAN WHO CAME TO OAK PARK . . . . .	10
III. BUILDING FOR GREATNESS . . . . .	19
IV. THE POWER OF THE WORD . . . . .	49
V. THE POWER OF EXAMPLE . . . . .	66
VI. ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL REPUTATION . . . . .	78
VII. SUDDEN DEATH: A NOBLE CAREER ENDS ABRUPTLY . . . . .	114
VIII. THE QUALITIES OF A LEADER . . . . .	133
REFERENCES . . . . .	146

## CHAPTER I

### TO HONOR A PRINCIPAL

*The celebration of the first decade of the leadership of Marion Ross McDaniel at Oak Park and River Forest High School*

The guests arrived on Friday evening, 7 March 1924, over two thousand of them, and took their seats in Oak Park and River Forest High School's Auditorium, its balconies draped in buntings of orange and blue school colors and its stage decked with flags and flowers. They came to honor a principal, Marion Ross McDaniel, the superintendent and principal of the one building district, Oak Park and River Forest High School. They came to honor him because he had just completed a decade of outstanding administrative service to the school. Such a ceremony by today's standards was in itself unusual, but as the evening unfolded, the expressions of respect made it extraordinary.

Loyalty letters signed by nearly three hundred alumni of Oak Park and River Forest High School were presented to Mr. McDaniel, who had an honorary doctorate but was always referred to as Mr. McDaniel, probably because of the force of his initials M.R. An oil painting by Louis Hovey Sharp (class of 1894) titled "Evening Glow: A Western Sunset" was given to him by Mr. George D. Webb in honor of the class of 1884, and finally a new Franklin Sedan automobile along with "sufficient extra for a garage and some maintenance" was

presented to him. Stunned by the ovation he received that evening, Mr. McDaniel did not trust himself to drive his new automobile home but asked for assistance from Mr. Frank L. Pickney instead.<sup>1</sup>

As they entered the auditorium, the guests were handed an elegantly printed program that set the tone for the evening's ovation. On the inside cover there appeared this poem by Ernest Bourner Allen:

M. R. McDANIEL - A TRIBUTE

Modest and grave, the faithful teacher stands,  
 A man far-visioned and of rugged stock,  
 Fit for his task and life's divine demands,  
 His house well built upon th' eternal Rock!  
 He fashions precious life, not stone or clay;  
 A laborer true, full worthy of his hire,  
 Content to reap tomorrow--not today;  
 His eyes a-dream and bright with mystic fire!  
 Not statesman, soldier, salesman he, or king--  
 A decade now the builder of our youth;  
 To him our tribute true with joy we bring,  
 This man who helps young seekers after truth!  
 Hail, Teacher! Friend of thousands gone afar  
 The high and holy work of life to do!  
 Long may thy friendship, like a guiding star,  
 Shine on youth's path and help them be true!<sup>2</sup>

The program showed that an orchestra was to play the "Introduction" and the "March of Homage" from the "Sigurd Suite" by Grieg, that Mr. Walter Tenney was to sing "Serenade" by Schubert and "Homing" by Teresa del Diego, that Stella Roberts was to play two violin solos, "Londonderry Air" by Kreisler and "Perpetual Motion" by Novacek, and that there were to be tribute speeches. The first of these speeches was given by Mrs. Edwin T. Johnson,

formerly president of the high school board:

It is a joyous task which your committee has assigned to me tonight. I am to express to the guest of honor something of the approval, the esteem and the gratitude this community feels for the fine service he has rendered in the past decade.

One of the happiest groups in the audience, I fancy, is the present board of education, who have, by council, by encouragement, and by co-operation shared with Mr. McDaniel in guiding and developing this rapidly expanding institution. But I remember another high school board of education that served you about a dozen years ago. That board was confronted with the problem of finding an assistant principal. It was probable we should need a man who was already the head of some school. He should have, of course, a background of sound scholarship; he must possess executive ability of a high order; he must have the right ideas of discipline and know how to enforce them; he must possess courage; he must have initiative; he must possess wisdom and tact in dealing not only with the adolescent minds of the students, but with the more mature ones of his teaching staff. Most important of all, he must be that indefinable something (the real teacher) must always possess--for which the richest board of education has never had a treasury big enough to pay adequately--a gift of dreaming dreams and seeing visions for the young people he works with and then being able by some divine alchemy to create in the hearts of those boys and girls a desire to realize in their own lives these ideals. In this instance, the man who possessed all these qualities and who had been a leader, must be willing now to subordinate himself and his gifts to the leadership of another. That, ladies and gentlemen, requires something high and fine in the man who does it.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Johnson then turned to the history of the selection of McDaniel as Superintendent and Principal:

When Mr. Hanna wrote to the board, 'I think I have made a real find,'--and then followed an enumeration of the qualities I have just mentioned--and more which he believed Mr. McDaniel possessed, he added, 'and Mrs. McDaniel, I find, is also held in high esteem by the people here. Her gracious personality, her sincere and straightforward manner and her rare musical gifts, which she gives generously to the

community, have won her a very warm place in their hearts. She also will prove to us, I believe, a great asset.' And then the McDaniels arrived and we found it all--including the wife--come true.<sup>4</sup>

She then proceeded to analyze McDaniel's philosophy of education:

One of the things that particularly interested the members of that board, was that the new assistant principal had some quaint and good old-fashioned notions about education. None of you, of course, are old enough to remember, as I do, that the educational world twenty-five years ago was in a state of change. As a reaction from the harsh system of a former generation--from what might be called the birch rod and wooden ferrule method practiced by well-meaning souls who knew one text from the Bible, if they knew no other--'spare the rod and spoil the child'--we swung to the other extreme, and we were then all over the country going through what might be termed the 'cotton-wool method of education.' Some leaders had caught catch words from Froebel, Pestalozzi and others without grasping the spirit, and we talked much about letting the child develop unhampered, the main point being that we must entertain and interest and amuse Johnny, but under no circumstances must we ever let Johnny suspect that he was being asked to work. Why, I've had parents, even in Oak Park and River Forest--I should like you to consider this confidential, even if it is ancient history--say to me, complacently, 'No, Johnny isn't doing well in Latin. He doesn't like his teacher; she doesn't make it interesting,' and dismiss it with a finality, so far as they are concerned, that absolved Johnny absolutely. I used to wish after such an interview that there was a perfectly legal and entirely humane way of rendering Johnny a 'temporary orphan' during his high school course. One of my old teachers summed up this 'cotton-wool' method thus, 'Why, nowadays, if we want them to say the multiplication table, we have to say, 'give it in your own words, dear.'

But this new assistant principal had a quaint notion that a school was a place where character was being shaped, and while he was genuinely interested in baseball and football, and track and tennis, and dramatics and operatics, and all the other things, yet, in his judgment, it detracted nothing from the football hero to have a few scholarship heroes in the



school. How he accomplished it I do not know, but scholarship honors in our school are very popular, and the class of 1915 left as its gift to the school a beautiful silver cup to be awarded each mid-year to the senior having the highest grade in scholarship for the three and a half years.... It is not a mere coincidence, I think, but a sequence of these facts that in the last three years the graduates of this high school scattered in colleges and universities all over the country, won twenty-four, perhaps it was twenty-five Phi Beta Kappa honors.<sup>5</sup>

It was a long evening of ceremony and accolades, that night of 7 March 1924. Mr. Edward Willcox representing thousands of alumni who, as he said, "spilled over into the community and the others who had gone afar," told of how he as a freshman felt when in December 1913 Mr. McDaniel's predecessor Mr. Calvin Hanna announced that he was leaving to take a job with the State of Illinois. "We felt that the bottom had dropped out of things." And then there were the rumors that Assistant Principal McDaniel was to be made principal. This man, Willcox thought, who was the school disciplinarian, would certainly be difficult to deal with as the head of the school. "As time went on," Willcox said, "we discovered that the bottom had not dropped out at all. Our school grew. Our teams became known throughout the country as winners. Oak Park High School became famous for the character of its work and for the way its students made good."<sup>6</sup>

Waldo Ames then spoke about the enviable record made in the world by representatives of Oak Park High School and presented to him the package of loyalty letters sent by some

three hundred graduates now in college. But the high point of the ceremony came when Dr. Vale made the presentation of the Franklin sedan. Said he, "This machine comes to you with the love and loyalty of over four hundred people who wished to participate in the gift. Let it be clearly understood, sir, that is not a part of your official equipment. It is to be used on those rare occasions when you take a vacation. It will come in handy when you go fishing, if ever you do go....Let me simply say that we are giving this machine to the finest high school superintendent in the United States. And may I add that Mrs. Vail and I hope that someday our two girls may have the privilege of being in the high school under your direction."

It was, of course, inevitable that at some point in this evening Mr. McDaniel would have to speak. And when he did, his style of image-rich language characterized what he said:

As I look back over the past ten years, I can say that they have been the happiest years one could possibly experience. Other careers in business, in commerce, in industry, cannot afford half the happiness. All the millions in the world could not repay me for the fun and happiness I have had in the last ten years. During all that time my cup has been full. Tonight it is over-flowing. Working with young people is different than working with ledgers or machines. A ledger mistake can be corrected. A broken machine can be replaced. But mistakes with human souls are tragic, if made. This human responsibility keys us up and adds zest and inspiration to our work. And when we see the success of students later in college or in business, it adds happiness to our lot.

I want to give credit where credit is due. The

teachers, the student body and the best parent--teacher association and board of education in the world have co-operated to help in anything that may have been accomplished....I haven't done so much. I sometimes think that with such help no one could have failed. The spirit of my colleagues and of the fine people in Oak Park has made success inevitable. I am at a loss to find words to express my gratitude.<sup>8</sup>

*The Trapeze* noted that the evening ended with a reception involving alumni, parents, teachers and students who mingled with each other and congratulated Mr. and Mrs. McDaniel.<sup>9</sup>

The events of the celebration of Marion Ross McDaniel's first ten years of service at Oak Park and River Forest High School provide a good point of departure for looking at the life of this school leader who clearly was a giant in his own community and stood so in the nation as well. He was one of the founders of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1916 and served as the vice-president of the organization in its first year, 1916-1917.<sup>10</sup> During the 1926-27 school year, he served the organization as president. He was on the committee that formed the National Honor Society and in 1933 he was elected president of that organization. He was a member of the Commission of the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges and for two years was the president of the high school section of the National Education Association. In 1938 he was again made president of the National Council of the National Honor Society and the National Junior Honor Society. He was a member of the Judd Club, a University of Chicago organization of Chicago

area school administrators, and a member of the Association of American School Administrators. He was invited by Secretary of State Cordell Hull to attend the cultural relations conference to be held in Washington, D.C. on 9 November 1939. He never attended that conference, for his sudden death on 31 October 1939 cut him off from that extraordinary opportunity.<sup>11</sup>

What were the qualities that thrust Marion Ross McDaniel into so many leadership positions and that made him so effective and respected for twenty-five years of leadership in a single school and district? Why was he singled out for honors after ten years of service, after fifteen, after twenty, and again after twenty-five? Why did his memorial service attract so many persons who wished to pay their respects that the auditorium could not contain all of them and the music hall along with the student lunchroom had to be used to seat the overflow congregation? There are no simple answers to these questions, but it may be that a close look at him through public records, newspaper accounts, and personal remembrances will reveal some of the qualities that marked him as a leader who enjoyed such respect.

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>"Honors for McDaniel," *The Oak Leaves*, 15 March 1924, 34.

<sup>2</sup>"In Honor of Superintendent M.R. McDaniel Upon the Completion of the First Ten Years of His Service at Oak Park and River Forest Township High School," 7 March 1924 (program).

<sup>3</sup>"Honors for McDaniel," *The Oak Leaves*, 15 March 1924, 34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>"Citizens and Alumni Honor Mr. McDaniel," *The Trapeze*, 14 March 1924, 1.

<sup>10</sup>H.V. Church, ed., *First Yearbook of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, (Chicago:The University of Chicago Press, 1917), 2.

<sup>11</sup>"1938 Seniors Pay Tribute to Mr. McDaniel," *The Trapeze*, 20 May 1938, 2.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAN WHO CAME TO OAK PARK

#### *Biographical facts and personal impressions of Marion Ross McDaniel*

Of the early life of Marion Ross McDaniel, little is known except that he was born on 17 October 1875 in Gallipolis, Ohio, that he was one in a family of six children, that he grew up on a farm, and that he attended a public grade school in Gallipolis and a public high school in Proctorville, Ohio. When asked whether her father seemed to have fond memories of his youth, Kathryn McDaniel responded, "I think he was happy. He told me how he used to catch fish, catfish, by reaching down and catching them by hand."<sup>1</sup> She also recalled fondly how her father, relying on the knowledge gained in his youth on the farm, had taught her to use a hand plow, to plant a garden, and to tend it so skillfully that its quality did not go unremarked in the Village of Oak Park.

When asked about her father's family, Kathryn responded, "There were six members of his family. My memory is hazy on that. There were five members in my mother's family. I know them all. I knew none of my father's family. I did meet my [paternal] grandfather once. I was sitting on his lap in an Indiana riverboat and the whistle blew and I

grabbed the nearest thing which was his beard."<sup>2</sup> Kathryn didn't know why her father rarely saw his family. She offered this explanation: "I don't think they were a visiting family. His brothers and sisters remained in Ohio and Huntington, West Virginia. I don't know whether they became farmers. George was the name of one of the brothers. We had one of George's son's come to us. His name was Emerson, Roscoe Emerson McDaniel, and dad sent him to school. I think you'd call it business college now."<sup>3</sup>

After he graduated from high school, Mr. McDaniel attended Marshall College in Huntington, West Virginia, for forty-eight weeks. Kathryn McDaniel said about his attending Marshall, "He probably had to row across the Ohio [River] to get there."<sup>4</sup> He then attended the military academy of Ohio Normal University in Ada, Ohio, for a period of forty-nine weeks followed by Rio Grande College, in Rio Grande, Ohio, from which he received his B.S. degree in 1902. In 1905 he received an honorary M.S. degree and in 1922 an honorary Litt. D. degree. His daughter Kathryn explained, "I'll tell you something interesting about Rio Grande College. It had no Phi Beta Kappa Chapter. So they gave him [Mr. McDaniel] an honorary doctorate of letters."<sup>5</sup> Since he had been such an outstanding student, and since the college could not present him with a Phi Beta Kappa key, it used the honorary degree as a means to recognize his scholastic achievement. In 1909 he received an M.A. degree from the University of

chicago in the subject areas of physics, chemistry, and education. This degree was hard to come by, not for academic reasons but for financial ones. While at the University of chicago, he was so financially strapped that he could scarcely afford food. "I'll tell you this. He lived on bananas and crackers at University of Chicago. And he attributed his later troubles with ulcers to his poor diet."<sup>6</sup> Following his work at Chicago, he studied for a period of six weeks at Columbia University. When Kathryn was asked how her father became such a scholar, she said, "I never thought of it, but my father must have been a very ambitious man, not the wrong way, but I think he must have felt there was something better for him to do than whatever he was doing at the moment."<sup>7</sup>

Before coming to Oak Park and River Forest High School as assistant principal in 1912, Mr. McDaniel taught in rural elementary schools in Ohio for two years, in the Huntington, West Virginia, High School for one year, and in the Sidney, Ohio, High School for one year. He then moved to Rushville, Indiana, where he served for a total of eight years, six of them as high school principal. It was in Rushville that he met the school district's itinerant music teacher, Ida Mariam Spurrier, one in a family of five children. She was a music teacher in a system which had grammar schools as well as the high school but her assignment did not include the high school. She also sang in



a church choir, and according to Kathryn "that probably did it better" to attract Mr. McDaniel to her. "Mother was a very hospitable person. I wish you'd known her. She was a wonderful person."<sup>8</sup> She became his wife. To Marion Ross McDaniel and his wife Mariam was born one child, their daughter Kathryn. When she was two years old, the family moved to Oak Park, Illinois. When asked how it happened that her father came to Oak Park, she responded that she thought he had applied for the position. She didn't know whether he had been called in to be groomed for the position of principal when Mr. Hanna would leave in a year and a half. For the next nearly twenty-seven years that Mr. McDaniel served Oak Park and River Forest High School, the McDaniel family enjoyed the respect and the admiration of the entire community.

What follows is a portion of an interview conducted with McDaniel's daughter Kathryn. It is included here to provide the reader with a first-hand sense of the man:<sup>9</sup>

**Interviewer:** When your father walked around, did he stand straight and tall as I get the image from so many of the pictures of him?

**Kathryn:** He was only 5'8".

**Interviewer:** He seemed much taller than that.

**Kathryn:** It know it. You couldn't mistake the fact that this was a person. When he walked into a room, people saw him.

**Interviewer:** He had what we would say today, "A Presence." Did he have his white hair early on?

**Kathryn:** He was gray when he came to Oak Park. He had fun with the teachers. The first meeting he had with them, he let them guess how old he was. He let them go and go and go. They got around 60 and knew that wasn't right. I never had a memory of my father except with gray hair.

**Interviewer:** He was only thirty-seven when he came to Oak Park. But his gray hair added to his distinguished appearance didn't it. Yet, there must have been something in his posture, in his stance, that gave him that commanding appearance of the "Silver Fox" as he was affectionately called.

**Kathryn:** Well, but he had a very pleasant face too. He wasn't....I think he was good-looking, but, ah, his countenance was pleasant, not forbidding, unless you had it coming, and then you got it.

**Interviewer:** A lot of people said he knew how to say "No" very well, and he could say it in such a way that it was

acceptable and that he frequently said, "We just don't do it that way at Oak Park." Would he ever change his mind?

**Kathryn:** If he said no to me, he always made it stick. But I didn't have any discipline problems.

**Interviewer:** Did you enjoy being with your father?

**Kathryn:** Well, everything I did with father was fun. I would learn things so easily from him. He didn't waste a lot of time giving you directions. He just showed you. That's what I meant when I said we took that Franklin Sedan apart. Saturday afternoon we'd take the oil cover off the top and oil the tappets.

**Interviewer:** You were always learning when you were with him?

**Kathryn:** Oh yes! He even gave me pointers about walking when I'd go on a walk with him. I often said I wanted to go that way. He said, "Well, that's a good way, but I want to go this way." And that's the way we went. Father taught me many things. He taught me how to screw in light bulbs, how to turn bolts so they would tighten, why it worked that way. He didn't like to do anything alone and neither did I. We were company for each other. I only hope my father adored me the

way I adored him. Father loved his work. He arrived early, was first person in the building in the morning and the last out in the evening and he had many meetings to attend.

**Interviewer:** Where did he find the time for you and your mother?

**Kathryn:** We were a family. He wasn't away every evening, but once in awhile he was. When he was coming home from a board meeting one night walking past Hemingway's old home on Oak Park Avenue, dad was mugged. I don't think they hurt him much but he threw the key out of the way because he didn't want anybody to get hold of it. It was a house key. I don't know if they took his wallet or his money. That wasn't important.

**Interviewer:** I remember reading in the board minutes that after that incident the board paid his cab fare home after board meetings so that he wouldn't have to walk in the dark.

The loving and respected father and teacher who is evident in this interview was the loving and respected principal and teacher at Oak Park and River Forest High School. When the principal, his wife, and his daughter moved into Oak Park, they occupied a duplex at 733 North Kenilworth Avenue. After several years they purchased the

home at 741 N. Oak Park Avenue which they occupied during the remainder of the Oak Park years.

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Kathryn McDaniel, interview by author, 2 August 1989, Asheville, North Carolina (tape recording of interview held by author).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### BUILDING FOR GREATNESS

*The first decade of the leadership of Marion Ross McDaniel  
at Oak Park and River Forest High School*

The story of Marion Ross McDaniel at Oak Park and River Forest High School began on 4 June 1912 when the board of education was presented with a recommendation by Principal Calvin Hanna to hire Marion Ross McDaniel at a salary of two thousand dollars per year to be assistant principal. Because Mr. McDaniel was ill and could not attend the meeting, the board deferred action on the recommendation until 4 June 1912 when he was able to be present for the board to meet him.<sup>1</sup>

Such carefulness of the board in its selection of administrative personnel typifies the involvement it had in establishing the kind of school it wanted for the communities of Oak Park and River Forest. It also speaks positively for the virtues of Mr. McDaniel in surviving the scrutiny of the board.

Very little is recorded about Assistant Principal McDaniel's activities during his first year of administration in Oak Park, but there is this curious account in *The Trapeze*, the high school newspaper, of 7 February 1913:

The price of the Sophomore class rings has been reduced from \$4.50 to \$4. M.R. McDaniels, assistant principal, discovered that there was not as much gold

as their price warranted. As a result, Quayle and Company, the makers, have agreed to let the school have the rings at \$4.00.<sup>2</sup>

Some careful sleuthing must have preceded such a discovery. How much more Assistant Principal McDaniel did in his first year is not recorded, but he must have given a favorable impression to the board because his salary was increased for his second year of service from \$2000 to \$2,200 per year, a ten percent increase.<sup>3</sup> While such an increase was most unusual in 1913, and while a salary of over \$2000 per year was high for the time, it clearly was not out of the ordinary for the board to pay such a salary. The board minutes of just one week later report the hiring of Zuppke as football coach at a salary of \$2100 per year.<sup>4</sup>

Further indications of the pleasure of the board with the work of Mr. McDaniel came quickly. When his predecessor John Calvin Hanna offered his resignation as superintendent and principal of Oak Park and River Forest High School on 27 September 1913, Marion Ross McDaniel was immediately appointed to head the school when Hanna left. Since Hanna's resignation was effective 1 January 1914, there was time to search for a replacement for McDaniel as assistant principal. On two separate occasions, (25 November 1913 and 11 December 1913), Hanna reported progress in the matter of securing an assistant principal to replace McDaniel. Nevertheless, the search turned out to be fruitless, for on the night of the 8 January 1914 meeting of the board of



education when Marion Ross McDaniel was appointed principal, McDaniel himself proposed that the position of assistant principal be abolished and replaced with a dean/counselor system that survives to this day at Oak Park and River Forest High School. The minutes of that meeting include the following letter to Mrs. E. T. Johnson, Chairman of the Committee on Teachers, Text Books, and Course of Study:

Dear Mrs. Johnson:

Relative to the assistant principalship, I wish to report that Mr. E. L. Marting, of Akron, Ohio, who is indeed well qualified for the position and who at the time I visited him was anxious to come to Oak Park, has now decided to remain in the Akron school. I know of no one else who is entirely satisfactory, and I recommend that we have no assistant principal for the remainder of the year. I recommend that we divide among three of our present teachers as much of the work as their class duties will permit. These three teachers have had charge of the three large desk rooms which are used as study halls and in this way they have necessarily become acquainted with many of the pupils. These three teachers are Mr. Bobbitt, Miss Richey, and Mr. Chenoweth. My plan is to have Mr. Bobbitt do the work with the first year pupils, Miss Richey with the second year pupils, and Mr. Chenoweth with the juniors. For this added work and extra responsibility I think that \$3 per month would be reasonable remuneration.<sup>5</sup>

As for his own remuneration, Mr. McDaniel's salary was increased by board action at the 8 January 1914 meeting to \$250 per month to complete the unexpired term of Mr. Hanna.<sup>6</sup> His salary was further increased to \$4200 for the 1914 to 1915 academic year.<sup>7</sup>

The appointment of Mr. McDaniel was well received.

The high school newspaper, *The Trapeze*, reported most positively: "Mr. McDaniel's appointment by the board was a very popular one to the students who feel that he will be able to fill the difficult position." In an editorial in the same issue, the writer gave approval of the counselor system introduced by Mr. McDaniel: "The immediate approval of the entire student body showed that this change was a wise one. The changes which necessarily follow the advent of the second semester have been distributed for three to handle instead of one, and each receives a more careful consideration....Mr. McDaniel may be sure that the student body is loyal to him, for in his work of assistant principal he showed his fairness to all in a position which was disagreeable because it occasionally necessitated the administration of discipline."<sup>8</sup>

There clearly was no "wait-and-see" time for Marion Ross McDaniel as he became leader of a growing secondary school that had already established a reputation for itself in the State of Illinois. That 8 January 1914 meeting of the board of education was involved in curriculum issues, an activity that epitomizes the twenty-five years of meetings to follow under the leadership of Mr. McDaniel. He proposed the textbook, *The Community and the Citizen* for use in the citizenship course. He proposed the use of a geometry textbook written by mathematics teacher Mr Taylor for use in the geometry class for repeaters while cautioning that this

permission was for the designated class only and that no use of this text in other classes or by other teachers would be permitted. He added that this permission should in no way be construed to establish a precedent for other teachers to use texts authored by them in their own classes.<sup>9</sup>

This same mathematics teacher Mr. Taylor was later the subject of the first teacher insubordination case that Mr. McDaniel had to deal with. Mr. Taylor had refused to conform to the rules of the superintendent/principal and the head of his department. What those violated rules were is not clear from the record, but one is tempted to conclude that somehow the manner in which Mr. Taylor used his geometry book was not in keeping with the restricted permission given to him by the board.<sup>10</sup>

Building and expansion were activities thrust upon the new superintendent/ principal almost immediately after he took office. At the 17 December 1914 meeting of the board of education, a proposal for purchase of additional land in the area boundaried by Lake Street on the south, East Avenue on the east, Ontario Street on the North, and Linden Avenue on the west was considered. This land was owned by Mr. Charles Scoville who offered to sell it to the high school for a "playground" subject to certain restrictions. One of these which limited the height of any structure to be built on the property eventually forced the construction of the stadium on the Lake Street side of the property.<sup>11</sup> The board

of education decided to finance this land purchase with the sale of bonds and went to the community for a referendum vote on 23 January 1915. By a vote of 719 to 219, the referendum was approved and the Board consummated the purchase. The field was scheduled to be ready for baseball practice in the spring of 1915.<sup>12</sup>

Land expansion and building remained central to the first decade of Mr. McDaniel's leadership. The ink had scarcely dried on the Scoville contract when the superintendent and the board were engaged in negotiations to expand the high school building. The ever-increasing population of the student body demanded more space for academic and physical education programs. In 1914 when McDaniel was named superintendent/principal, the student population was 1053; by 1915 it had grown to 1220; by 1916 to 1267; by 1917 to 1421; and by 1918 to 1449. It is not surprising, then, that in June 1918 the superintendent/principal was recommending to the board that an addition be constructed along Scoville Avenue, a structure that throughout the project was referred to as the East Wing. Preliminary plans were prepared by two architectural firms, one known as Holmes and Flynn and the other the firm of Mr. E.E. Roberts. Holmes and Flynn were eventually awarded the design contract and E.E. Roberts was engaged as a consulting architect. At its 16 October 1919 meeting the board of education authorized the presentation

to the voters of Oak Park and River Forest as a referendum issue the sale of \$300,000 worth of bonds to cover the cost of constructing the East Wing addition.<sup>13</sup>

While this project was in progress, discussions of adding a West Wing began, along with proposals to finish the third floor of the South Wing, recommendations by Mr. McDaniel to expand the library, and pressure from football enthusiasts to build what they referred to as a "grandstand." There simply was no way to escape the fact that more and more students were going to be enrolled in the school and space expansion was going to have to occur. Mr. McDaniel continued to encourage the board to look to purchasing surrounding properties since the school building itself was virtually land-locked. On 4 January 1922 the board authorized the purchase of the Pitkin property with frontage of 360 feet on East Avenue and 100 feet on Scoville Avenue for \$45,000. On 14 June 1922, the board made overtures to purchase more property on Scoville Avenue at a cost of \$85 per front foot and to purchase what was referred to as the Ross property. Unable to negotiate what it considered a fair market price for another piece of property desired in the expansion move, the board used eminent domain prerogatives to condemn the property and establish the fair market price. On 18 October 1923, the board authorized the purchase of more land in what was referred to as Block 28. On 13 December 1923, the board authorized the purchase of

what is referred to as the Seymour property.<sup>14</sup>

Principal McDaniel did what he had to do under these circumstances. He continued to raise questions about how to accommodate the numbers in the immediate and near futures. At the 7 October 1920 board of education meeting he reported that eight teachers were without rooms and four were using "stub" rooms, making a total of twelve teachers who needed to be accommodated. Figuring on at least five new teachers in the middle of the year to take care of the 150 pupils expected from the public grade schools of the district with possibly 20 more from outside and private schools, when the new East Wing addition would be finished, seven teachers would still be without rooms. "At the present rate of increase," he said, "in 1924 the enrollment will reach 2500." He pointed out that in the next year, the school would be required by law to establish a vocational school which would mean at least 300 more pupils than would ordinarily come to the high school.

In February of 1923, he took board member Perkins around the property to show him the complexity of adjusting the building for the 1923-24 student body. He sought the consultation services of Judd and Morrison at the University of Chicago, but they were unavailable. He then contacted what was referenced in the minutes as the Department of Education (probably the Bureau of Education), a federal agency in Washington D.C., to send consultants to survey the

district and make recommendations concerning the needs disclosed in the survey. He considered whether the district should establish a separate technical high school and whether grade nine students should be served in junior high school buildings, with the technical high school adjacent to the existing building and the junior high schools located one each in south and north Oak Park.<sup>15</sup>

When the survey was completed, the consultants presented a report containing these recommendations: (1) Establish junior high schools as soon as possible; (2) Build the West Wing addition immediately; (3) Convert the existing gymnasiums to classrooms; and (4) Build new physical education facilities in the recently acquired land south of Ontario Street.<sup>16</sup> Aside from the huge bond issue that would be necessary to build a completely new physical education facility south of Ontario Street, Principal McDaniel had reservations about that proposal. He felt that the separation of the facility from the academic building would have a negative impact on the efficiency of movement from academic activities to physical activities and back to academic. He personally conferred with architects to seek other solutions, but it is clear from what he ultimately proposed as a solution that the architects persuaded him of the wisdom in building a new physical education facility south of Ontario Street. His recommendations for a comprehensive building plan were presented to the board of

education on 23 December 1923. There were three major building projects in his plan:

1. Construct the West Wing addition to increase the classroom space for academic work.
2. Convert the present boys' gymnasium into a cafeteria.
3. Construct a new gymnasium facility including two swimming pools in the plot of land immediately south of Ontario Street.

The board voted to adopt Mr. McDaniel's plan and proceeded immediately to launch a publicity campaign to sell the project to the community.<sup>17</sup>

On 31 January 1924, an open meeting was held with special invitations extended to key members of the Oak Park and River Forest communities. Principal McDaniel began the meeting with a presentation describing the crowded conditions in the school and revealing the demographic projections indicating continued and dramatic growth in the student population. His plan was in the tradition of "make no small plans," and it carried a hefty price tag of \$725,000. The board defended what must have been a shocking cost to the listeners. The minutes of that meeting record this justification:

It was brought out by the board members in the discussion which followed that \$725,000 is a small amount to expend on a building unit as compared with building costs of other high schools: the J. Sterling Morton High School at Cicero had just completed an addition costing \$700,000, the Joliet Township High School within the last two years has completed a building costing \$900,000 and has let contracts for another to cost \$800,000, making a total of



\$1,700,000 in a little over two years for school buildings in a city with a smaller population than this high school district.<sup>18</sup>

The members of the community attending this open meeting apparently recovered quickly from their shock at the price tag, were convinced of the need to expand, and voted to support the project before they left that night.

It was not only property acquisition and building projects that occupied Mr. McDaniel during his first decade. Building for him also meant building of programs and building of curriculum. During his first ten years, he added courses in public speaking, in Spanish, in citizenship (a second semester course to be taken by those students who had failed Latin or algebra), in military training, and in agriculture; he added a graduation requirement in science although several times he saw fit to recommend to the board that girls planning to go to select eastern colleges be permitted to waive this requirement to make room for other courses required for admission; he recommended that a night school be established in which students could pursue studies in English, arithmetic, citizenship, shorthand, typewriting, and bookkeeping; he continued to recommend new textbooks with fresh approaches to subject matter including the Stone-Mills text in algebra, the Espinosa and Allen text in Spanish, Wentworth's text in algebra, Robbins' text in solid geometry, Scott's text in Latin, Rietz and Craythorne's college algebra text, Hedger's text in Zoology, *Harmony*

*Simplified* in music, Magowan and Waite's text in textiles and clothing, and *Fabulae Faciles*, an introduction to Caesar. He recommended the purchase of a "moving picture machine" (a projector in current vocabulary), and he recommended spending substantial sums of money to purchase art work for the school building. He struggled to maintain a fierce local autonomy. When the Cook County Superintendent of Schools declared 5 October 1921 to be a County Teacher Institute Day, he recommended that the board decline to participate and the board voted to hold school on that day.<sup>19</sup>

Principal McDaniel saw salaries increase dramatically during his first ten years, 1914 to 1924. His own salary increased from \$3,200 per year to \$9,000 per year. Teachers' salaries increased from a range of \$1,000 to \$2,200 per year in 1913-1914 to a range of \$1,950 to \$5,200 for 1923-24. Salary increases for the 1920-21 school year alone jumped by an astonishing twenty to thirty percent over the previous year. McDaniel's own salary increased from \$5,000 in 1919-1920 to \$6,500 for 1920-21, a jump of 30 percent. In February 1923, the principal reported to the board of education that it was indeed true that Oak Park and River Forest High School teachers were the highest paid in Cook County, but the per capita student cost at the school was the lowest in spite of the fact that the teacher-pupil ratio in the school was the lowest in the county with the

exception of LaGrange.<sup>20</sup>

Lest any taxpayer worry whether or not the high paid teachers at the school were worth the money, McDaniel continued to remind the board of the quality education students were receiving at Oak Park and River Forest High School. He told the board on 13 November 1919 that students from the school earned better grade point averages in their studies at the University of Illinois than they had earned in their studies in high school. On 23 February 1921, he reported to the board that thirty-one boys and girls attending the University of Illinois from the high school had a collective grade point average of 84.2 percent. Those same students had a collective grade point average of 80.2 percent at the high school and couldn't get into the University of Chicago because of their lower scholarship. At the 26 May 1921 meeting he told the board that 367 pupils from 42 schools had competed for scholarships at the University of Chicago, and students from Oak Park and River Forest High School had won three of the eleven scholarships and had received eight honorable mentions. On 16 November 1922, he told the board that Prof. Lyman of the University of Chicago had told him that Oak Park and River Forest High School students outranked students from all other schools in the exactness of their answers and in the quality of the English they used.<sup>21</sup>

McDaniel's first ten years were not without their

problems, to be sure. Mathematics teacher Taylor continued to be difficult. At the end of the 1915-16 school year, Taylor turned in grades that were impossible in view of the marks he had given in the middle of the year. McDaniel told the board that the percentages given by Taylor were too low and did not represent the facts in the case, that Taylor's pupils should be given credit for passing the course, and that the percentages given by him should not be entered on the permanent record or on the home report. The board concurred.<sup>22</sup>

Dealing with communicable diseases in the school also presented problems in McDaniel's first decade of service at Oak Park and River Forest High School. In September 1915, several students had become infected with typhoid fever, causing the principal to question whether the drinking water in the school was safe. Dr. Beebe of the Oak Park Board of Health attended the 27 September board meeting to tell them that he thought the sources of the disease had been located and that it was not necessary to proceed further with attempting to isolate sources in the school. When asked by the members whether a report from the Illinois State Board of Health might reveal otherwise, Dr. Beebe responded, apparently with some pique, that the report he had presented was carefully researched by Dr. Tonney and should be considered the final and highest authority. Nevertheless, the chairman of the Committee on Building and Grounds

reported that an analysis of drinking water in the school done by Columbus Laboratories revealed the drinking water was not entirely safe. The board then voted to shut off all drinking fountains, to mandate that the lunchroom boil all the water it used, and to authorize the purchase of suitable bottled water tanks with individual paper cups for drinking.<sup>23</sup>

In 1920 there were six cases of smallpox reported within the high school student body itself and two more within the boundaries of the villages of Oak Park and River Forest. McDaniel immediately called a meeting of the board of education at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, December 5, to consider how best to proceed in the face of this crisis. Dr. Needham, Oak Park Commissioner of Health, was also present at that meeting to advise the board. A bulletin issued by the Oak Park Department of Health had been prepared on the previous day for presentation to the board. One of the stipulations of that bulletin was the following:

Be It Resolved, By the Board of Health, Oak Park, County of Cook, State of Illinois, that on and after December 4th, 1920, no child, teacher or other person employed in or about the Oak Park and River Forest Township High School building shall be admitted, received or retained, or shall be permitted to attend school, who cannot produce a certificate, from a legally licensed physician and surgeon, that he or she has had SMALLPOX, or that he or she has been successfully vaccinated with an external vaccination within the last five years.

Be it Further Resolved, That all pupils of the Oak Park and River Forest Township High School are

considered exposed to the disease, and are hereby ordered into quarantine upon their home premises unless they immediately comply with the foregoing requirement.<sup>24</sup>

The board of education did not in any way challenge the validity of the proposed quarantine but simply discussed with the principal practical ways to enforce the order of the Department of Health. Fortunately, the cases of smallpox did not spread any further, and the board minutes of 24 January 1921, record that Mr. McDaniel reported the Oak Park Board of Health had removed the smallpox ban and all pupils were now admitted to the school.<sup>25</sup>

Another challenging problem for McDaniel in his first decade at the high school was what to do about sororities and fraternities. The board of education had taken a position against secret societies in high schools some time before McDaniel was engaged as assistant principal, for records dating before 1912 already show the board embroiled in controversy with students over their alleged membership in fraternities and sororities--"secret societies" as the board labeled them. The reason they took such a hard line against such societies was the essentially undemocratic nature these societies. They encouraged cliques among students, they established a world of in-groups and out-groups, and they militated against the collegial attitude so fundamental to an academic institution. If students were discovered to be members of secret societies, they were immediately expelled by the board of education.

The minutes of just one board meeting (29 May 1915) contain these references to the secret society problem:

It was moved by Mr. Kraft that Raymond Hardy be expelled from school for violation of the rules of the board regarding secret societies, he having admitted that he had been a member of Omicron Kappa Pi while a student in the high school.

It was moved by Mrs. Douglass that the following girls be expelled from high school for violating the rules of the board, by belonging to Phi Gamma Upsilon fraternity: Margaret Walbank, Alice Burras, Marie Tutwiler, Frances Wright, Ruth Simpson.

Mr. Allison moved that the following girls be expelled from the school for belonging to Phi Gamma Upsilon fraternity: Irene Gafner, Helen Shepherd.

It was moved by Mr. Allison that the board suspend the following girls pending further investigation: Charlotte Bruce, Marytine Oliver, Dorothy Krueger, Lucile Yates.

Mr. Ingalls read a communication from Amos Whittle a student expelled from the school in 1912 for belonging to a fraternity. Mr. Ingalls recommended that the office secretary write to Mr. Whittle, thanking him and that the communication be placed on file.<sup>26</sup>

This sorority and fraternity issue was one that simply would not go away. Even the national organizations of these societies became involved. Kappa Alpha Pi wrote to McDaniel urging him to ask the board to reinstate a group of boys who had been expelled. The board instructed him to file the letter. In September 1916 the board asked the principal to draw up a short form letter to parents regarding secret societies in the high school explaining the rules of the board in this matter. The letter was to be sent by registered mail to all parents of students new in the school

in the fall of 1916.<sup>27</sup> In March 1917 the board of education urged McDaniel to go again to Springfield, Illinois, where he had previously testified before the legislature in support of an anti-fraternity bill that was before the body of lawmakers, if "in his judgment it seemed best for the interests of the anti-fraternity bill."<sup>28</sup>

On 15 May 1917, the board members held a special meeting to consider secret societies in the high school. McDaniel presented students John Lander, Donald Carqueville, Fred Wilkins, and Ray Matthews to the board for questioning about secret societies in the high school. Lander and Carqueville stood accused of violating the rule of the board concerning secret societies and Matthews and Wilkins were questioned regarding their knowledge of the workings of secret societies in the school.<sup>29</sup> As a result of this inquiry the board took action at its 4 June 1917 meeting to refuse readmission to Lowell Barr, Glenn Hecox, Lloyd Boyle, Howard Stanton, George Burrell, Jean Tallman and William Newell. They had withdrawn from the school, because "the rules of the board in this connection [secret societies] have probably been violated by these students."<sup>30</sup> On 16 April 1921, McDaniel reported to the board that there was a movement in Springfield to eliminate the definition of fraternity from the state's anti-fraternity law. This potential action represented a compromise in the effectiveness of the law in containing what he considered



inappropriate activity in a high school.<sup>31</sup>

The hard-line approach used by McDaniel and the board to eliminate secret societies from the high school backfired when the *Chicago Tribune* reported that some students in the school had joined a group known as the Inner Circle, a "secret" group committed to reporting misbehaving students to the school administration. The purpose of the article was clearly to bring this group, which was apparently supported by McDaniel, under the secret society policy. It was, in short, an attempt to embarrass McDaniel and the board, and was possibly initiated by some student who had been expelled under the rule. In any case, McDaniel called a meeting of the senior class at which he explained what the Inner Circle group stood for. "Several years ago," he said, "a national organization known as the Inner Circle was started in connection with the YMCA. Many fellows in school might have been members of the society, but its aim was to better conditions relative to school life, such as doing away with cigarette smoking and promoting clean speech. The following paragraph taken from the 'Rules and Suggestions for Conducting the Inner Circle' shows its purpose:

In order to be of immediate helpfulness in this New Crusade of the Master, I purpose from this time to give at least one hour a week in definite effort to make it easier for some boy in school or some other person in my community to be better, happier or more active in spreading the spirit of Christ.

McDaniel continued his explanation to the senior class of the purpose of the Inner Circle--what it intended

to accomplish and, in this instance the important matter of what it did not intend to accomplish:

The statement that an Inner Circle existed at any time, that it had as its purpose to snitch on pupils in regard to their school life is absolutely false. On several occasions pupils have unknowingly given me information concerning other pupils. Again, people have given me information concerning certain pupils over the telephone. The only instance in which I have seemed to ask information this year was concerning the ring leaders of the gang who were setting freshmen on the water fountains. And this I did with the understanding that the person to whom I gave this request should give me the names only if he thought it proper to do so."

This is one of the few times that Mr. McDaniel seemed to be on the defensive in his first decade of leadership at Oak Park and River Forest High School. He carried his message about Inner Circles further to the junior class and then to other students who had gathered for a class play rehearsal. While the *Tribune* article had the potential for causing disruption in the school, it apparently did not have that effect. Reporters had come to the school after the publication of the article, apparently in hopes of finding students on strike or engaged in other disruptive activity. Instead they found a school "particularly quiet and calm."<sup>32</sup>

Controlling student behavior was one of Mr. McDaniel's strengths as a school leader, but there were times when he misjudged students. There was, at one time, a wire fence around the school lawn to prevent students from walking on the grass as they entered or exited the school building. The board saw this fence as detracting from the

general appearance of the school grounds, especially when a handsome new fence was being erected around the athletic grounds recently purchased from Mr. Scoville. McDaniel told the board he had faith the students would not tread on the grass if the fence were taken down because they had sufficient pride in the school's appearance. The board then authorized the fence be removed. McDaniel called the students together in an assembly where they promised with great applause that the removal of the fence would not cause them to walk on the lawn. So much for faith and promises; on the following Monday the promise had been forgotten and dozens of pupils trooped across the lawn.<sup>33</sup>

If at times he misjudged students, he never lost his keen insight into them. To a group of parents of freshmen he said, "Boys, when they enter high school think they are men but they are only mannettes."<sup>34</sup> This essential put-down of young men as they entered high school is balanced by his treatment of students as adults as they prepared to leave school. Parties hosted by Mr. and Mrs. McDaniel for senior students were not uncommon events. On 6 February 1920, one of these parties was held in connection with the senior class play. This party was different from previous senior class play parties hosted by the McDaniels in that all senior students were invited to attend, not just the seniors who were in the play. *The Trapeze* referred to this inclusion of all seniors as "more democratic" and said, "Mr. McDaniel,

with his characteristic modesty, in assuming the responsibility for a decided success, stated 'The important thing is that it is going to be a good party and we want every senior to be there.'<sup>34</sup>

Giving parties for the senior class was an annual event for the McDaniels. One report of these parties is especially rich in detail:

MR. AND MRS. MCDANIEL ENTERTAIN CLASS OF '24

"A Midsummer Night's Scream," a take-off on the senior class play, and dancing to music furnished by Clark Agnew's orchestra, were features of the party which Mr. and Mrs. M. R. McDaniel, the principal and his wife, gave for the seniors last Saturday evening in the auditorium and girls' gymnasium [sic]. Everyone complimented everyone else at the Senior Banquet which took place before the McDaniel party.

In the take-off, which was written by Margaret Carr, Ruth Blount and Leonore Ovitt, playful masculine fairies, produced much merriment. The lovers of "Midsummer Night's Dream" were represented as seniors who came to their king, Mr. McSamuel, begging for more lockers and more room. The king promised to grant their prayers on the condition that they would be on the honor roll. "Obrien" accused "Titanica," alias Paul Lewis, of being too frivolous; but Puck i.e. William Ellsworth, sprayed upon Titanica and the sleeping seniors a liquid which gave them great wisdom. There was much more to the stunts and one roar followed another when such dainty fairies as Maxwell Nickerson tripped lightly across the stage.<sup>35</sup>

Such social involvements of the McDaniels were not confined to students, but were found in their relationship with the faculty as well. On 24 September 1915, Mr. and Mrs. McDaniel held an opening-of-the-school-year reception for the faculty, or as *The Trapeze* phrased it, "the august body," at their home at 733 N. Kenilworth Avenue.<sup>36</sup> Such

entertainment of the faculty by the McDaniels was apparently an annual occurrence. At the opening of the 1919-20 school year they held a party for all faculty members at the River Forest Tennis Club. The report of that party in *The Trapeze* captures in a curious and perhaps satirical manner the "down home" fun enjoyed by the guests:

#### MC DANIELS ENTERTAIN AT TENNIS CLUB

Mr. and Mrs. McDaniel last Friday evening gave their annual party for the faculty at the Tennis Club. Games, dancing, and music furnished the entertainment until a late hour when refreshments were served.

The feature of the evening was a pseudo croquet game, carried out with fans and rolls of paper. A hard contest waged, and betting ran high before Mr. Gunn, the champion, downed Mr. Bobbitt and Mr. Ingalls. Mr Bunce helped matters along by conducting the cheering which added to the high excitement of the game.

Another incident of the evening was a searching party for a hidden treasure, won by Miss Chamberlain of the English Department (Giving the credit to the English Department) who was the recipient of a box of candy as a prize.

Miss Weckel, who is away on leave of absence this year, could not be present. However, she sent a large basket of roses.

The music was furnished by Mark and Stella Roberts.

The faculty all agreed, at the close of the evening, that Mr. and Mrs. McDaniel were, as ever, the most charming host and hostess.<sup>37</sup>

There begins to emerge out of all the involvements of McDaniel in his first ten years at Oak Park and River Forest High School a portrait of a leader that accounts for the extraordinary praise he received at that party in his honor on 7 March 1924. He was a builder of curriculum and a

builder of classrooms, anticipating well the needs of a student body that doubled in size during his first ten years as leader. He was a courageous reorganizer of the administrative structure in the school. He was firm in his dealings with students and faculty, yet he could have fun with both in social gatherings that he and his wife sponsored. He was an extraordinary observer of detail, yet he never lost sight of the big picture and the overall purpose of the school. He was effective in blunting the challenges to his leadership in the secret society expulsions. He was discriminating in his decisions to involve consultants or to "go it alone." He was persuasive in his selling to the community a \$725,000 bond issue for building an athletic complex with two swimming pools, in his selling the board on having the highest paid teachers in Cook County, and in his celebrating the accomplishments of graduates of the school. It was from the mouth of Mr. McDaniel that the words "top school in the nation" came forth first. There emerged at Oak Park and River Forest High School under the leadership of McDaniel a culture committed to excellence and driven by pride. It was a culture characterized by competitiveness on the athletic field and in the classroom with rich rewards offered for achievements in both. It was a culture in which there were academic and athletic winners and losers and no apologies for the latter, for losers themselves had decided to take

the road to failure by their lack of energy, effort, and enthusiasm.

The values McDaniel cultivated in the school culture reflected the values of the community. It should not be surprising then that the community honored him so highly after his first ten years. As a matter of fact, at least one honor ceremony preceded the 7 March 1924 affair. Just two years after he had been named principal, a banquet in his honor was given by the faculty, on the evening of 17 March 1916. This banquet, which was served by the ladies of the Second Congregational Church, featured a St. Patrick's Day theme with the serving ladies dressed in green and the tables decorated with ornamental green frogs and snakes. It was Mr. Bobbitt who gave the tribute toast on this evening. He chose the word "square" in the sense of "absolutely fair" to describe McDaniel:

We have met on this occasion to honor our Principal. We should honor him because in all of our dealings with him we have found him square. No other word in the language fits Mr. McDaniel so well as the word square. In his honesty, in his sense of justice and in his straightforward dealing with teachers and pupils he has ever been on the square.

We should honor him for his loyalty to the school and to the faculty as subordinate workers. Little do we know the numerous occasions when he could have gained personal advantage by disavowing our acts, but we have always found him with us fighting our battles for us, although he may, though with wider experience, see wherein we have bungled. Such loyalty deserves this mark of gratitude.

We should honor him for his attainments. Though scarcely older than the most of us, he has climbed the ladder to a commanding position in the

educational world as head of a school which in its class has no peer in the west.

In studying the character of men who have risen above their fellows, there is usually found some small trait which in its abnormal development becomes the dominant reason for their success. What is this hidden characteristic in our Principal? What is the secret of his success? In the language of Shakespeare, "Upon what meat does this our noble Caesar feed that he has grown so great?" I have found it and will let out the golden secret. He has learned how to say the word "no." Gently but firmly "no." In a position such as he fills, hundreds of little favors are being asked which require skillful handling for the good of the whole, and human nature is inclined to err on the side of assent rather than dissent. It is the good fortune of our principal to know when and how to say the word "no," the hardest word in the language for an educator to successfully use. May we profit by his example.

If I should give a toast for this occasion, it would be this: May the harmony and good fellowship between faculty and Principal, which has characterized the past, continue as an asset in the future.<sup>38</sup>

If such high praise came to McDaniel after only two years at the helm of Oak Park and River Forest High School, it should not be surprising that after ten years such a celebration would take place. As the 7 March 1924 date approached, various tributes were published and honor ceremonies began to be held. On Friday, 11 January 1924, a student assembly was held to honor the Principal.

Representatives of each of the classes gave speeches paying their tributes. Claire Packard said, "The school is like a big machine, well-oiled and well-run." Robert Harris confessed his secret fears of McDaniel, and Virginia Chapman and William Schukraft celebrated the many clubs and activities that McDaniel had added to the school. McDaniel



then spoke words of gratitude and humility, saying that the greatest changes in the life of the school come with the students. "They go, but their spirit and work remain after them."<sup>39</sup>

The Trapeze of 18 January 1924 contained this tribute to McDaniel:

When a student gets high marks he is given recognition. When an athlete plays the game well he is applauded. Mr. McDaniel, in his ten years at Oak Park, has, figuratively speaking, made high marks and played the game well, so this opportunity is taken to give him the recognition and the applause that he deserves.

There is a large firm that has for its slogan, "Through service we grow." They mean, of course, that by giving their patrons service they grow. We can apply this slogan to Oak Park in another sense. Through the service of our Principal we grow and have grown, for the best student body or faculty in the land would mean nothing without a competent leader. Mr. McDaniel is Oak Park's competent leader, and it is largely due to his efforts that we have grown in such a wonderful manner. It was quite fitting that on the anniversary of his ten years of service here an assembly was given in his honor by the seniors.

Talking at this assembly, Mr. McDaniel said that he had grown with the school. His heart has grown so there is a place for all alumni, students, and students to be. Mr. McDaniel must be using the slogan quoted above for his own motto.

Because of his success and the good work he is doing for Oak Park we again extend to Mr. McDaniel our congratulations and appreciation of his service.<sup>40</sup>

At the 13 December 1923 meeting of the board of education, Mr. McDaniel told the board that he had reached the completion of his tenth year as principal of the school. He pointed out that the school had doubled in size and the teaching force had nearly doubled: from 1053 pupils in 1914

the number had increased to 2200 in 1924; from 52 teachers in 1914 the number had increased to 99 in 1924. He said that when he became principal he formulated three objectives for himself: to improve moral conditions, to eliminate freshman failure, and to create a finer spirit of friendship between pupils and teachers. He said that he soon realized the first condition didn't need much improvement, and that he had made some progress in the last two objectives. He recalled that when he first became principal he had recommended land expansion. He found it ironic that he stood before them again recommending further expansion. The board congratulated him that night, to be sure, but saved the big congratulations for 7 March 1924.<sup>41</sup>

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> Board of Education Minutes, Oak Park and River Forest High School, 4 June 1912.

<sup>2</sup> "Reduction is Secured in Sophomore Rings and Pins," *The Trapeze*, 7 February 1913.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes, 24 April 1913.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes, 29 April 1913.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes, 8 January 1914.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes, 25 April 1914.

<sup>8</sup> "M.R. McDaniel Now Principal," *The Trapeze*, 20 January 1914.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes, 8 January 1914.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes, 17 December 1914.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "Bond Issue for New Field Wins," *The Trapeze*, 3 February 1915.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes, 12 June 1918 through 16 October 1919.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes, 7 October 1920 through 13 December 1923.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes, 23 October 1922 through 22 March 1923.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes, 20 April, 1923.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes, 13 December 1923.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes, 31 January, 1924.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes, January 1914 through February 1924.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes, 14 June 1916.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes, 25 September 1915.

<sup>24</sup> Resolution by Oak Park Department of Health, 4 December 1920.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes, 24 January 1921.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes, 29 May 1915.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes, 19 September 1916.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes, 29 March 1917.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes, 15 May 1917.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes, 4 June 1917.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes, 16 April 1921.

<sup>32</sup> "Agitation Cleared Up About Inner Circle Meetings in Each Class," *The Trapeze*, 21 February 1919.

<sup>33</sup> "Unsightly Lawn Fence Removed," *The Trapeze*, 23 November 1915.

<sup>34</sup> "Mr. McDaniel to Give Party for Seniors in Honor of Class Play Cast," *The Trapeze*, 6 February 1919.

<sup>35</sup> Dorothea Hammann, "Mr. and Mrs. McDaniel Entertain Class of 1924, *The Trapeze*, 7 March 1924.

<sup>36</sup> "Teachers Busy," *The Trapeze*, 23 November 1915.

<sup>37</sup> Kathryn Ratcliff, "McDaniels Entertain at Tennis Club," *The Trapeze*, 18 January 1924.

<sup>38</sup> Susan Lowrey, "Principal McDaniel Banqueted by the Faculty," *The Trapeze*, 23 March, 1916.

<sup>39</sup> Lenore Ovitt, "Honor to Principal Given in Assembly," *The Trapeze*, 18 January 1924.

<sup>40</sup> "To Mr. McDaniel," *The Trapeze*, 18 January 1924.

<sup>41</sup> Minutes, 12 January 1923.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POWER OF THE WORD

#### *A Review of the Writings and the Speeches of Marion Ross McDaniel*

"Members of the Class of 1918, we honor the boys to whom we have dedicated this issue of *Tabula*. Many of them are 'over there,' and some have gone 'over the top.'" With characteristic dignity and formality Mr. McDaniel opened his statement on the "Principal's Page" of the 1918 *Tabula*. He continued: "We admire them for wanting to go, and we admire them even more because they have lost no opportunity to prepare themselves as well as possible to do something when they do go. Those boys know why they are going, and they are willing to work hard in preparation. Many of them have been decorated with the *Croix de Guerre*. It did not just happen--they were prepared, and they made good."<sup>1</sup>

He then listed some of the ways in which the Class of 1918 had gone "over the top." Quoting the class motto, "There is no victory without effort," he complimented the class for having done so much outside work. He pointed out that the class had contributed to the YMCA War Fund, had sold Liberty Bonds, had bought Thrift Stamps, and had worked for the Red Cross. He singled out the athletic teams for their successes during the school year: five

interscholastic championships is more than had ever been won by the school in its history. And then his words turned, as they always did, to the highest praise for the academic achievements of the students. "Going 'over the top,'" he said, "has not prevented your going over in scholarship." He observed that the Scholarship Cup was won by the highest grade average since it was first presented in 1915, that in the University of Chicago scholarship examinations the school had done better than the thirty-six other schools taking part in the examinations and better than any other class from Oak Park and River Forest High School had ever done.<sup>2</sup>

Then came the big admonition:

Opportunities for going "over the top" will not cease on your receiving your diplomas. There will be greater opportunity and more responsibility for you than for any previous class. Every boy who loses his life "over there" is leaving his opportunity, his responsibility, is leaving his chance, to you. This applies to girls as well as to boys, for girls are doing and must continue to do, much of the work formerly done by boys. You must be ready to take the places of the many boys who, but for this war, would assuredly have been our great scientists, business men, writers, lawyers, or statesmen, in the future. Not only America, but the world, is looking to the young men of the United States for a Lloyd George, a Joffre and a Woodrow Wilson.

Continue your education. Go to college if possible, but at all events, continue your education. You are not so valuable in the army now as you will be when you are twenty-one, nor so valuable as when you have had college training. Keen minds and quick thinkers are needed here, there, and everywhere. Don't miss your chance.<sup>3</sup>

There is a sermonic quality about this admonition, a sorting

of the essential from the peripheral in school, an isolation of the primary from the secondary. While the words appear in print on a page in the yearbook, they are clearly chosen for the quality they would have if spoken. In everything Mr. McDaniel wrote there was this oratorical quality. It is apparent that he thought of himself speaking as he wrote, that there was something of the minister in all the lines of his prose style. In the "Principal's Page" column of the 1919 *Tabula*, he again was the minister at work:

What is to be your scale of values? Some things naturally exclude other things. Being a successful business man, or a successful anything worthwhile, excludes being an easy-going drifter. You cannot be an enthusiastic patriot and a slacker at the same time. You must choose. Did you make one of the teams? You had to choose to train regularly rather than lead a life of self-indulgence. Did you make good on the school publications: You had to choose to work many hours after school, rather than spend the afternoon in other ways that at the time may have seemed desirable. Those who did not make good were not willing to sacrifice the good time, but really they are the ones who did sacrifice. Their good time was only temporary, while yours is permanent. According to their scale of values, they were having a good time, but with a truer scale of values you will always look back on your success and on the really good time you had in achieving it, and the 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant!' will be a joy to you always.<sup>4</sup>

The smooth and easy path leads to no permanent pleasure. The difficult path leads to great reward. This is Biblical, or classical, at least. Hercules had to choose between a life of pleasure with no recognition at its end and a life of painful struggle with great reward at its end. Mr. McDaniel constantly held up that Herculean sorting and

choosing before the students of Oak Park and River Forest High School.

Students had to choose between using their heads or not using their heads, between thinking or not thinking. To the class of 1920, Mr. McDaniel said, "'As a man thinketh so is he,' and as the Class of 1920 thinketh so is it."<sup>5</sup> He continued his homily on choices with these words:

If one thinks wrong, he will act wrong. Thinking that witchcraft was a reality, the people acted on their belief, and in Massachusetts alone a score of witches were put to death.

We are too much inclined to accept things as they are, or to take another's thoughts about them without troubling ourselves to do our own thinking. James Bryce says, 'For two hundred years the Judges of England sat on the Bench condemning to death every man, woman and child who stole property to the value of five shillings, and during all that time not one Judge ever remonstrated against the law.' The mass of the German people followed the thinking of a few of their leaders who taught that they were a people chosen of God to rule the world. It took much effort on the part of the allies to convince them that their thinking was wrong.

We have not only followed the false thinker, but we have refused to follow the true. At first people would not believe that the printing press would ever be a practical thing. The inventor of the daguerreotype could not convince people at the time that it was more than a plaything, and now we are taking pictures on land, in air and under the sea. The man who first said that we could talk long distances by means of a wire was laughed at, and the one who said we could do the same thing without wires was thought to be insane.

Although there has been much wrong thinking yet all progress has been due to thought. The swallow does not think, and she builds her nest as she did a thousand years ago, but man no longer lives in caves...And yet today, although we have gone far, still there is much need of clear thinking. Someone has said, 'Today everybody is talking, but few are



thinking. We are crazy, seeking after amusement. There is a mad desire to get rich quickly and a reluctance to do any real work. We seem to be afflicted with chronic St. Vitus's dance.' As Walt Mason puts it, 'Our souls are ablaze with a Bolshevik craze.'

Continue your education. Go to college if possible, but at all events continue your training in clear and sane thinking.<sup>6</sup>

Such words proceed from a sure sense of right and wrong, a clear set of values that appear to be derived from a set of absolute principles. There are no "gray" areas in the application of such principles. Things are either right or left, dark or light, good or evil, sane or insane, valid or invalid, high or low, virtuous or vicious. To the class of 1921, the opposites Mr. McDaniel held up for analysis and judgment were selfishness and cooperation. Said he, "It is generally conceded by economists and efficiency experts that the bad condition of industry today is due to selfishness or lack of co-operation on the part of workers. By workers we mean both employer and employed. It seems that war-time prosperity made us lose our heads, made us unwilling to accept a fair profit, made us unwilling to do a fair day's work for a fair return. It may be just a reaction from our fine spirit of sacrifice and service for a great cause during the war, but whatever the reason we must all get to working together."<sup>7</sup> He then attributed the successes of the athletic teams to the wonderful spirit of cooperation with which they played and held that cooperation up as a model for life. "At Dayton," he said, "the team fought like

spartans....There was no thought of self in the mind of one of the boys. It was team work and team work won." He admonished the class of 1921 to "Continue your fine spirit of team work and co-operation wherever you may be. Somebody must right the troubled conditions of the present."<sup>8</sup>

If the need for cooperation in business was the basic image Mr. McDaniel used in his message to the Class of 1921, it was another business image that formed the basis of his message to the Class of 1922. Said he, "There is a common saying among business men that when you need anything you pay for it, whether you buy it or not. If a merchant needs certain lines of goods, and does not buy them, he will have to pay for them anyway in loss of trade to his competitor who has the goods." And there you have that Mr McDaniel habit of mind again of analysis to identify polar opposites, two roads with one attractive and difficult to follow and the other unattractive but easy to follow. Take the difficult road and "purchase" an education, but remember, he said, "Education is not the only thing you need. You must have friends....If you do not pay for your friends by being friendly, you will have to pay for them in the unhappiness of not having them. Friends will add years to your life and life to your years."<sup>9</sup>

Mr. McDaniel's "Principal's Page" message in the 1923 *Tabula*, the school yearbook, was constructed around a most unusual thought. He began by referring to a personnel

director of a large department store who said that a high school diploma should be a life sentence to hard labor. He continued by writing, "Life itself, in the same meaning of the term, is a sentence to hard labor, for 'there are men's lives tied up in everything we wear or eat or use.' We live not to ourselves; our work is life." He then referred to the Indians who, in his view, merely inhabited the country and therefore made little progress toward what civilization calls life because the Indian did not labor. "We can't imagine progress without work," he wrote. And that's where the burden of the high school diploma comes in. Education increases the capacity of the individual to work harder and as a consequence a burden to work longer and in more difficult tasks. Turning to Biblical phrasing once more, McDaniel declared, "More is expected of the man of five talents than of the man of one talent, and still more of the man of ten talents. The work you have done to earn the diploma has increased your talents an hundred fold."<sup>10</sup>

The final paragraph of the 1923 message contains in a short space the common McDaniel rhetorical devices: Classical choices ("May you wisely choose. Choose for service, not for self"), chiasma ("Plan your work and work your plan"), and Biblical language ("Taste the joy that springs from labor"). In addition it is steeped in the Puritan work ethic that laces its way through the philosophical expressions of Mr. McDaniel.<sup>11</sup>

To the class of 1924, Mr. McDaniel again held up two roads: "Picture yourself as you would be if you had not been in high school these four years." He then questioned how the students were different because they had chosen the road of going to school. They were different, he opined, because they had gained a mastery "over the tools" they needed to work. "As never before, we must know," he said. "If you are not up on a thing, you are down on it." From an analysis of tools, the principal's message moved on to rules. "More important than the fifteen or sixteen units are the rules of study, punctuality, fair play and of keeping your conscience in good working order. "The New York Giants once lost the pennant because a runner failed to touch second base." He admonished the class to use the academic tools they had acquired and to apply the rules to whatever game of life they were going to play. That way friends and neighbors would be able to say, "He is a winner!" Winners and losers, students and non-students, players by the rules and cheaters, wise and foolish. The McDaniel catalog of opposites seems endless. Not unexpectedly, the message ended with a prose device built on opposites and a reversal--the chiasma: "A winner never quits; a quitter never wins."<sup>12</sup>

If the 1924 "Principal's Page" in the *Tabula*, the school yearbook, hinted at what we today call the affective domain in education, the 1926 "Principal's Page" dealt with it directly. "To learn to get along together. That is one of

the chief purposes of education as the great educators of today see it." And how does a school teach these lessons in getting along together? Through debate contests, through winning and losing in athletic contests, through cooperative efforts in producing the school paper, and in staging the class play. "A man may be educated in books, but unless he has learned to get along well with his fellow man, whether he win or lose, he is not really educated." And then, quite uncharacteristically, Mr. McDaniel seems to imply a third road when he closes the page with the familiar, "It counts not if you have won or lost,/ But how you played the game." Yet, the roads here are not really the apparent three of winning and losing and playing the game, but rather they are the two roads of the results of a contest (winning and losing) on one side and playing the game on the other.<sup>13</sup>

The achievement of ordinary persons is the subject of the message written by Mr. McDaniel in the 1929 *Tabula* with its word play title, "Ability and Stability." There is in this piece a remarkable statement of the work ethic commonly associated with the puritan tradition, the kind of work moralism found in the *New England Primer* and the *McGuffey Reader*:

Roger Babson, the great statistician, says that all of the leadership and initiative in our country is bound up in two per cent of the people. If he is right, I suspect that most of us are only ordinary people. This suspicion was borne out during the War when 1,700,000 picked men took the intelligence test given by the American Army. Only about four per cent of them reached the highest grade. Most of us th...

have the same problem that Theodore Roosevelt had, to make the most of ordinary abilities, to make the most of our best.

When Colonel Goethals was chosen to dig the Panama Canal he did not have a brilliant record as an engineer, but he was chosen for his loyalty to his work, his trust-worthiness, and his determination of character.

Thousands have puttered away in the laboratory, but the hard-working Roentgen investigated. When asked, "What did you think when you saw the cardboard glowing?" he replied, "I did not just think; I investigated. "His investigations, carried on with great patience and skill, gave us the X-ray.

A London dispatch says: "A cold bitter gale today had no terrors for Helen Wills who practiced for more than an hour on the outdoor tennis courts of the Queens club. "Chick Evans used to be on the golf course every morning rain or shine while his neighbors were still in bed.

John Wanamaker was one of America's best examples of a public-spirited and successful merchant. His biographer says the success of his mature years was but a result of adherence to the ideals of his boyhood, industry and integrity.

Probably neither Eckersall nor Red Grange will ever have on the campus a monument to their brilliant playing, but the friends of Dave Hansen have erected at his Alma Mater a memorial tablet with this inscription: "He played four years on the scrubs, but he never quit."

Hundreds of other boys of ordinary ability grew up in Milan, Ohio, and were interested in trains and the telegraph, but Thomas Alvah Edison, "Al" as he was then called, was enthusiastically interested. Although we now call him a wizard and consider him a great genius, he himself defines genius as two per cent inspiration and ninety-eight per cent perspiration. He worked ten years on his storage battery before he was satisfied with it and he worked on the moving picture machine over thirty years.

No one of these was successful because he was more brilliant than others. No one of them believed that work was a curse given to us because of Adam's disobedience. No one of them won success suddenly,

but after continued steadiness of purpose and firmness of character.<sup>14</sup>

In the last paragraph of this message celebrating the virtues of work, Mr. Mc Daniel uses a rhetorical device common in formal oratory during the nineteenth century in America, that being the initial repetition. In this instance it is repetition of the phrase "No one of these [them]" at the beginning of each of the sentences of the paragraph. Again in this instance it appears as if Mr. McDaniel thought of his written words as if they were to be spoken. The emotional effect of the rhythm established by initial repetition in a delivered speech is considerable; whether that effect carries over when the same device is used in print and the words read silently is subject to question. It is, however, common among those who knew him to comment on the effect of his written messages and it just may be that this device of the spoken word served the written word as well. Initial repetition of phrases appears very early in the writings of Mr. McDaniel as an administrator at Oak Park and River Forest High School. In the 25 May 1916 issue of *The Trapeze*, the high school newspaper, he begins each of the four paragraphs of his words of commendation to the editorial staff with "I congratulate...."<sup>15</sup>

There is in this message also the use of concrete example and what might be called picture-rich language. In their analysis of the nature of leaders, Bennis and Nanus say, "We have found in our discussions with leaders that

visions can often be communicated best by metaphors, or models--as when a political leader promises 'a chicken in every pot' or a phone company asks you to 'reach out and touch someone.'"<sup>16</sup> McDaniel asked the members of the Class of 1929 to reach out and touch the models of Roentgen, of Helen Wills, of Chick Evans, of John Wanamaker, of Dave Hansen, and of Thomas Edison. The virtues of persistence and hard work could have been celebrated in the abstract in the words of a lesser leader and with much less effectiveness. Concrete example and picture-rich language characterized McDaniel's words of farewell to the Class of 1931: "You have excelled in scholarship, in athletics, in activities, and in fine spirit. The Piper was so fine that I know all of you will soon follow him off to college or to some other worthy activity...." <sup>17</sup>

His words of farewell to the Class of 1934 continue the image-making style:

"All the World's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players."

All of you boys and girls, too, have been choosing and playing your parts. Some of you have played down stage in the glare of the footlights and others have played equally well up stage. As the curtain is being closed on this first happy act of the drama, you can look forward with confidence. You have had the best of coaches. You have learned that the costume, although a valuable aid, will not play the part. You have learned to think, to like to use your mind, to think beyond the Ivory Door. You are now ready for the next act. It is your cue. The stage may be set with confusion and uncertainty, the properties may be misplaced, there may not be enough parts to go around, but this is only an opportunity, only a challenge to the class of 1934 "To act well your



part."<sup>18</sup>

This image-making style was not confined to use in his speeches to students. In a report in *The Trapeze* of a speech by Mr. McDaniel at a parent-teacher meeting, the writer Graham Eddy captured a medical metaphor used by McDaniel to clarify the relationship that involves parents, teachers, and students:

The relation between parents, teachers, and students was the theme of Mr. McDaniel's talk to the parents and teachers at this year's first parent-teacher meeting Friday evening.

In the development of this idea he said that a teacher was like a doctor when he is called upon to treat a sick child. The doctor first diagnoses the case independently and then he consults the parents and they work together. This clearly shows the co-operation which should exist between the teachers and the parents.<sup>19</sup>

In another report of this speech, the writer Muriel Harris recorded this image:

He quoted from an article which said that too many parents are like the six blind men who, each feeling a different part of the elephant, get just one idea of it. So it is with parents who see just one phase of school life and draw their conclusions on the whole system from one viewpoint.<sup>20</sup>

On one occasion it appears as if Mr. McDaniel was unable to complete an image-laden speech at a meeting of the Class of 1929 because the bell rang marking the end of a class period and students had to leave for their next class. *The Trapeze* report of that incident contains these paragraphs:

In closing he [Mr. McDaniel] told that around the time of the one hundred and third Olympiad Pliny had

gone to the Coliseum and because he could not find a seat he began to wander around looking for one. He passed people of all sorts and none of them paid any attention to him, but when he came to the Spartan section the people all arose. Pliny shook his head sadly and said, "All Greece knows what to do but only Sparta does it."

The bell rang so Mr. McDaniel was not given time to explain his story in terms of our life but we suppose that he meant that Oak Park High School should stand out a manner like Sparta, so that people could say, "All schools know what to do, but only Oak Park does it."<sup>21</sup>

Even in informal speeches or statements to students, Mr. McDaniel relied on images to communicate his message. In a pep rally speech prior to the Oak Park and Evanston football game in 1928, he said, "The sight of a football player never gave a cannibal an appetite, for it is well known that football participants are half sand and half backbone."<sup>22</sup> The meaning of part of that image is lost today because *sand* is no longer used as a word to signify courage or "guts" as it was in the nineteen twenties. But once that signification is understood, it is pleasing to see how McDaniel played with the literal and figurative uses of the term in his pep talk. On another occasion, when he was asked how he liked the new furniture in his office, he replied, "I'm happy as a boy with his first red-topped boots."<sup>23</sup>

It is not a matter of coincidence that the tribute to Mr. McDaniel in the 20 May 1938, *The Trapeze* is itself an image-rich piece of writing by an unnamed student. That student celebrated McDaniel using the image of a captain and a ship throughout the tribute:

From the first day that he assumed command of the ship S.S. Oak Park-River Forest Township High School, Mr. Marion Ross McDaniel imbued both the crew and the passengers with a feeling of confidence in his ability and quiet, discriminating intelligence. With steady hand the superintendent piloted his great ship through calm and troubled waters, keeping it in the first rank of vessels of its kind....

Each load of passengers worked eagerly under his careful guidance as he prepared the way for the ultimate landing. Each load disembarked with thankfulness for and appreciation of the training they had received from him, and with high hopes for their futures....

His irreproachable principles, his lofty ideals, and his untiring efforts in behalf of better education have developed a tradition and precedent that promise continued progress and success for his great ship.

So it is with a sincere sense of gratitude that the graduating Class of 1938--passengers of his twenty-fifth crossing--fire silent, mental guns of tribute for an inspiring past, and make confidently optimistic prophesies for a magnificent future to Superintendent M.R. McDaniel, commander-in-chief of SS. Oak Park-River Forest Township High School.<sup>24</sup>

The image, if overdrawn and trite by today's standards, is in the McDaniel tradition with its attempt to make the abstraction of respect for a leader understandable in concrete terms and with its use of initial repetition in the second paragraph. The student, consciously or unconsciously, was writing in imitation of the master.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "The Principal's Page," *The Tabula*, 1918, 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "The Principal's Page," *The Tabula*, 1920, 70.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "The Principal's Page," *The Tabula*, 1921, 79.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "The Principal's Page," *The Tabula*, 1921, 79.

<sup>10</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "The Principal's Page," *The Tabula*, 1923, 86.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "The Principal's Page," *The Tabula*, 1924, 92.

<sup>13</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "The Principal's Page," *The Tabula*, 1926, 107.

<sup>14</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "Ability and Stability," *The Tabula*, 1929, 21.

<sup>15</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, "A Word of Commendation," *The Trapeze*, 25 May 1916.

<sup>16</sup>Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 107.

<sup>17</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, *The Tabula*, 1934, 21.

<sup>18</sup>Marion Ross McDaniel, *The Tabula*, 1934.

<sup>19</sup>Graham Eddy, "Mr. McDaniel Speaks on Co-Operation to Parents," *The Trapeze*, 24 March 1922.

<sup>20</sup>Muriel Harris, "Co-Operate is Message Explained to parents," *The Trapeze*, 24 March 1922.

<sup>21</sup>"McDaniel Talks to Senior Class in First Meeting," *The Trapeze*, 19 October 1928.

<sup>22</sup>"Big Pep Meeting Arouses Spirit of Student Body," *The Trapeze*, 2 November 1928.

<sup>23</sup>"New Furniture Adorns Mr. McDaniel's Office," *The Trapeze*, 11 January 1929.

<sup>24</sup>"Youth's Friend," *The Trapeze*, 20 May 1938.

## CHAPTER V

### THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

*A study of Marion Ross McDaniel's use of great persons to influence the students in his school*

The medieval exemplum was a tale told to teach a lesson about life and about living. It most often involved the story of a great person who had triumphed over adversity or evil. The central character of the exemplum was frequently a person who became a saint in the church because of the extraordinary triumphs he or she had achieved in living a life worthy to be emulated. Such persons were held up as models to the laity and frequently were the subject of daily devotional reading. The theory was that exposure to the greatness of such individuals would have the effect of transferring some of their noble qualities to those who heard or read about them.

While canonization of individuals may not be as prevalent today as it once was, it is still not uncommon to hold up great persons to be emulated. Longfellow's lines "Lives of great men remind us/ We can make our lives sublime" capture the very common impulse to encourage personal greatness through example. It is apparent in the record of the life and work of Marion Ross McDaniel as the leader of Oak Park and River Forest High School for a

quarter of a century that he believed very strongly in exposing the students to worthy examples, in seating students at the feet of greatness. That greatness was in the form of the faculty members he selected to teach the students daily and in the form of the outside speakers he brought in for assemblies. He selected faculty who were highly educated in their field and who also exemplified in their daily living the virtues he wanted his students to learn. The assemblies he scheduled for his students involved a wide variety of famous personages who represented the best in personal skills and in living what he considered to be moral lives.

The list of famous individuals who came to the school is extensive and includes the following persons who spoke at assemblies: Billy Sunday, William Jennings Bryant, Ex-President William Howard Taft, "Dad" Elliott (Associate Director of the YMCA), World War I Pilot May, Scientist T. O. Rugg, Brown University President Dr. Charles Barbour, University of Chicago Dean Dr. C.W. Gilkey, Aviator Amelia Earhart, Negro Orator Roscoe Conklin Simmons, and News Commentator H.V. Kaltenborn.

Speakers for assemblies and other assembly programs were obtained through an interesting participatory process involving students directly supervised by Mr. McDaniel himself. "Sometimes the entertainer or the speaker will have an agent who either calls, telephones or writes for an

engagement for his or her client. Others are personally known by either Mr. McDaniel, the teachers, or the students. It is very interesting to note, however, that very rarely was an assembly brought to the school without first being heard by Mr. McDaniel. An article in the school paper commented on this practice:

Several years ago the name of a certain entertainer, a magician by profession, was being considered for coming to our school. Consequently, one night when he was in this vicinity Mr. McDaniel and a group of students selected for that purpose, went to see him. At the end of the program each student and Mr. McDaniel told their decision as to the advisability of having him at one of our assemblies. Although that is but one instance, it very clearly shows the amount of time, effort and thought that is given over during the whole year toward getting the best that there is for our school is an enormous task."<sup>1</sup>

The exuberant reporter, after some discussion of funding such assemblies, concludes with an expression of appreciation to those who plan the assemblies: "And so it is plainly seen that only through the untiring efforts of Mr. McDaniel, the faculty, and the students that such splendid programs are obtained for us throughout the entire year."<sup>2</sup>

In December of 1933 alone, there were six highly accomplished persons who spoke at student assemblies. They were Dr. Luther Gable who lectured on "The Astounding Story of Radium," Cosette Faust Newten who spoke on the "The Rainbow Hued Trail," Richard Finney who made a presentation on "Among the Igloo Dwellers," J. Winston O'Keefe who presented "Songs and Lore of the Old West," Robert Tschaegle (Lorado Taft's assistant) who spoke on "What and How a



Sculptor Does It," and Jessie Rae Taylor who gave impersonations of characters.<sup>3</sup>

Roscoe Conkling Simmons, a black who was Chairman of the Republican Bureau of Speakers and a renowned speaker on Abraham Lincoln, spoke at an assembly of juniors and seniors during third period on 12 February 1934 commemorating the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of Lincoln's birth. In his presentation, Simmons emphasized that the fame of Lincoln was compressed into a relatively short period of nine years, yet he attained great fame because of his understanding of human nature and his tremendous willpower. The genius of Lincoln was in his thought and feeling. The lines of his face, deep as they were, showed his sensitivity and the depth of his feelings for the problems and sorrows of the people of the country. Sensitive as he was, however, he did not swerve from what he knew was the right decision, even though his thinking was ahead of the sentiment of the masses in the nation. His kindness made him spend unwisely, and he failed continually in any business enterprises.

Lincoln attached himself to an unpopular people and to an unpopular cause. The first time that he witnessed the selling of slaves was while on a trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans. At that time he vowed that if he ever had the opportunity, he would try with all his force to abolish slavery. The opportunity did not come until forty-two years later....Washington gave to his country a statement on government; Jefferson gave a statement on the purpose of freedom; whereas, in his famous Gettysburg Address, Lincoln portrayed a new meaning and significance to the words of liberty and freedom.<sup>4</sup>

One of Oak Park and River Forest High School's own teachers, Dr. C.E. Osborne, was the featured speaker at a third period assembly in February of 1934. Dr. Osborne, who was head of the Chemistry Department, spoke on the changes that had come about in Oak Park during the last thirty years. He stated that thirty years ago only twenty-five automobiles could be found on the streets of Oak Park, and those vehicles were driven at what he referred to as the unbelievable speed of ten miles per hour. In 1934, in America he continued, one automobile was available for every four Americans and Sir Malcolm Campbell had reached the speed of 272 miles per hour in a streamlined car. He talked about other technological advances: the wireless telegraph, the development of aviation, and the utilization of the X-ray which at first had been regarded as a plaything but had since become of critical importance to medicine and in determining the nature and the structure of atoms and crystals.

This last point led Dr. Osborne into the main discourse of his presentation which was on the universe of atoms. He used models of the structure of atoms and explained that atoms are the smallest particles of an element and that they involve negative and positive particles of electricity, calling them by their technical names of electrons and protons respectively. He then made the astonishing statement that if all matter could be

compressed so that the electrons and protons were touching, the earth would be only one-half mile in diameter. The vacant spaces between electrons and protons are so vast, he claimed, that an atom might pass through another atom without a collision. His lecture then went into what today might be termed "Living Better by Chemistry" and celebrated the creation of butter substitutes, rayon, and Duco paint have been developed from cottonseed oil, how dye-stuffs, headache cures, and nearly one thousand other products have been developed from coal tar, how temperatures within one fourth of absolute zero and a temperature of 35,000° have been attained. "The present day chemist is like an amateur fingering the stops of a gigantic pipe organ. But what miracles will come to pass when he knows the entire range of the organ? This is not the end, but the beginning, and the best is yet to be."<sup>5</sup>

Lectures such as Roscoe Conkling Simmons' and Dr. Osborne's were calculated to stimulate creative thinking and open doors of possibilities for all the students. Mr. McDaniel counted on that indirect effect to occur, but he did not leave it to chance in his choice of other speakers. In March of 1934, he brought in Dr. Samuel Grafflin, who occupied the Chair of Ethics at McBirney Preparatory School in New York and edited the *American Aristocrat*, to speak directly on how to become an achiever in a speech entitled, "Six Point Living in a Three Way World." "If you lie down

with dogs," Dr. Grafflin said, "you will get up with fleas, and if you lie down in swill the hogs will eat you." "Chew your food, say your prayers, save your pennies, and take a bath as often as you can." "If you want to own strawberry patches when you are old you must watch your strawberry sundaes while you are young." He celebrated the virtues of hard work and the dangers of giving hand-outs. He told how in his hometown, the citizens once decided to give a poor woman in the community a home and to secure a job for her daughter. Doing so was a mistake because, according to Grafflin, the next day three hundred more poor people had camped out on the fairgrounds. His point apparently was that one should not give handouts, that all persons should work for their living. He celebrated the virtues of hard work, the wisdom in choosing associates of high calibre, and the necessity of ascertaining things of value and going after them. And even though his audience was made up entirely of public school students, he turned his speech to Christian moralizing by saying that people should have a deep and sincere worship of God. To add a bonus to this behavior, he said that in a group of sixty-six leading businessmen of the world, sixty-five were found to be men of worship.

Dr. Grafflin then said that he himself worked to grow each day by reading two chapters of the Bible, a page of his dictionary and a short biography. He encouraged the students to watch their money. He opined that the biggest thing in

education of the day was to learn to become aristocrats without becoming greedy. "Pray yourself straight," "Serve your fellowman," Grafflin advised, and specifically to the girls he suggested chauvinistically that their service to others will win them a crown in heaven even if their present concern, like that of all women, is one whether their hair permanent will last till pay day. The reporter covering this lecture concluded his article with this evaluation: "All the students in attendance agreed generally that such a constructive lecture was most profitable in showing the way to finding the real values in life."<sup>6</sup>

By today's standards such a speech with its fundamentally religious purpose would be completely out of place in a public school. It might even be considered a violation of Title IX because of its essential chauvinism, and its "Doctrine of Wealth" would most certainly raise philosophical questions. But it is clear that its values were quite acceptable in the Oak Park community of 1934 and that Mr. McDaniel, whose life epitomized those values, was no doubt quite pleased with the lessons taught directly to the students on this day.

Moralizing speakers in the nineteen thirties who ventured into subjects that would be considered risky today did not constitute a new development in Mr. McDaniel's choices of speakers for assemblies at Oak Park and River Forest High School. In May of 1918, Mr. McDaniel brought

Billy Sunday to the school for an afternoon assembly. Rev. Sunday ranted through a variety of topics calling Germans "Bull-necked, weasel-eyed, sauerkraut-eating mutts," and calling girls "...gum-chewing, rag-time playing, frizzle-haired, pink-nailed candy things that can't lift a dish-rag to help their mother." His final benediction was, "Keep off fads."<sup>7</sup> What is astonishing is that there was no indication in the report that this speech was in any way considered offensive and one can only conclude that Mr. McDaniel did not consider it inappropriate either.

Literature, culture, and the arts were frequently featured subjects of lectures. One of the teachers of French at the school, a lady referred to as Madame Bluzat, was frequently a featured speaker. She spoke on changes that had taken place in important French cities in recent years, about schools and methods of teaching in France, and about modes of living in the urban and rural areas of France. Students reported that these lectures enabled them to keep up with the rapid changes in France, both politically and socially. Graduates of the high school who had gone on to college frequently returned to the high school with high praise for the advantage they enjoyed for having heard Madame Bluzat's lectures.<sup>8</sup>

In the host of cultural lectures arranged by McDaniel there was one that involved a most versatile participant, Dr. Derrick Lehmer who was the head of the Department of

Mathematics at the University of California had come to the high school to read his poetry. The man was distinguished in the field of mathematics, was a recognized poet, had written an opera, was a scholar in music, and an accomplished pianist. His verses were for the most part poetic recreations of American Indian songs. One of his poems that he read was "The Harvest," a tale of a Hopi Indian village being attacked by the Apache tribe while the warriors were gathering the harvest. The village was saved because of the courage of an old woman who had cried out "Come down from the Mesa" as the attackers approached. Her cry was used as a refrain throughout the poem. He also used themes from the history of whites in America to feed his creativity. His ballad "Adam's Thorne" is about the Salem Witchcraft Trials and other ballads of his involved cowboy lore.<sup>9</sup> Such a versatile performer represented a McDaniel ideal, the broadly educated person, and it is safe to conclude that McDaniel found Dr. Lehmer a prime exemplum for the students of Oak Park and River Forest High School.

Whether the exemplum theory had the effect that McDaniel envisioned is questionable, but his thinking that students needed to be seated at the feet of greatness periodically to gain an enhanced sense of their own potential is probably quite valid. Those students who would only read about a Dr. Lehmer and his fabulous versatility could reasonably conclude that he represented a different

order of human, that he breathed a different kind of air, and that a different kind of blood coursed in his veins. Seeing him, however, they had to conclude that after all, he was merely human like them and because he was like them they gained an enhanced sense of what they could accomplish. They would say to themselves, "This man or this woman is really no different than I am, and if he or she can do it, so can I."



## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>"Reporter Reviews Interesting Story About Assemblies," *The Trapeze*, 9 January 1931.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Oak Park Students Attend Series of Varied Assemblies," *The Trapeze*, 16 February 1934.

<sup>4</sup>"Well-Known Negro Orator Speaks at Lincoln Assembly," *The Trapeze*, 16 February 1934.

<sup>5</sup>"Dr. Osborne Shows Contribution of Chemistry to Science in Assembly," *The Trapeze*, 16 February 1934.

<sup>6</sup>"Dr. Grafflin Points Way to Personal Achievement in Assembly Lecture," *The Trapeze*, 16 March 1934.

<sup>7</sup>"Billy Sunday Speaks at Assembly," *The Trapeze*, 24 May 1917.

<sup>8</sup>"Madame Bluzat to Lecture Today," *The Trapeze*, 19 November 1937.

<sup>9</sup>"Dr. Lehmer Reads Own Poetry at Senior Assembly," *The Trapeze*, 16 October 1939.

## CHAPTER VI

### ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL REPUTATION

*The last fifteen years of the leadership of Marion Ross  
McDaniel at Oak Park and River Forest High School*

It was not a new set of challenges but variations of the same challenges faced in his first ten years of service that tested McDaniel in his last fifteen years at Oak Park and River Forest High School. Student enrollment continued to increase and as a consequence the school needed to add more classrooms, offices, and physical education facilities. The Great Depression hit with its consequent effect of uncollectible taxes and loss of revenue for the school. Because of the Depression, fewer students were able to go on to college after graduation. This made it necessary for the high school to think differently about its programs, especially in the area of specialized vocational training, for it had become eminently clear that many students would be joining the work force immediately after their high school graduation. Student failures were increasing, perhaps from lack of motivation when going to college became impossible for some. Problems with students violating the policy of the board of education and the State of Illinois prohibiting fraternities and sororities continued to be brought to the board by McDaniel. And student discipline

appeared to be more of an issue, perhaps because of the size of the school and the larger classes into which students had to be packed.

In 1924 the student enrollment had increased to 2366. By 1925, it was 2480. By 1926, 2682. The numbers continued to swell. (See Table 1)

October 1927:	2815
March 1928:	3197
November 1928:	2942
April 1929:	3326
October 1929:	3086
February 1930:	3316 (McDaniel reports that 3575 different students attended the school in 1929-30)
October 1930:	3339
February 1931:	3784
October 1931:	3603
February 1932:	4077
October 1932:	3718
May 1933:	4176
September 1933:	3763
September 1934:	4019
May 1935:	4167
September 1935:	3781
May 1936:	4100
September 1936:	3753
October 1937:	3661
October 1938:	3557
March 1939:	3814

**Table 1:** Source--Board of Education Minutes<sup>1</sup>

The larger second semester enrollments reported by McDaniel to the board were a consequence of the practice of mid-year graduations in the District 97 schools, a source of frustration for McDaniel and a cause for controversy with District 97. This controversy will be explored later in this chapter.

In the Oak Park and River Forest community in general there was a higher percentage of youth of high school age

than represented in the population in general. At the 24 October 1924 meeting of the board of education, McDaniel reported that in Illinois elementary students represented 87 percent and secondary students 13 percent of the school population; in Oak Park those percentages were 72.83 for the primary and 27.17 for the secondary.<sup>2</sup> Following this same theme, McDaniel used lantern slides at the 3 November 1925 meeting of the board of education to emphasize the financial impact of the high percentage of high school students in the student population of Oak Park and River Forest. In the state, he pointed out, 13 percent of the public school students are in high school; in Oak Park and River Forest, 28.2 percent are in high school. He used these statistics to establish a case for more money for the school. Said he, "We have more pupils to educate but have very little money to spend on their education as shown by the fact that our assessed valuation per pupil is next to the lowest of any suburban school around Chicago."<sup>3</sup> He went on to explain how the high school was achieving such an economical educational program. "One way we have been economical with our money is getting the finest teachers available and giving them more than an average number of pupils. This method, though economical, gives the pupils the finest education."<sup>4</sup> To prove his point about the low cost per student at Oak Park and River Forest High School, McDaniel provided a chart analyzing the cost per student in selected school districts

with similar resources and student populations. This chart is appears below as Table 2.

Town	Per Cap.Val	Per Cap. Cost	Stnt./Tchr.Ratio
Cicero	\$9,150	\$220	22.9/1
Evanston	17,319	250	19.0/1
Harvey	12,438	190	20.6/1
Highland Pk.	21,164	255	17.6/1
LaGrange	20,095	167	25.2/1
Kenilworth	13,017	247	17.1/1
Maywood	9,283	200	21.0/1
OPRF	9,362	168	23.8/1

**Table 2: Source--Board Minutes<sup>5</sup>**

By using such data, McDaniel was attempting to fix in the minds of the taxpayers the value they were receiving for their tax dollar and was preparing them mentally to pay more taxes to support construction and teachers' salaries as the school population continued to grow.

Throughout this period of growth and corresponding building of the East Wing, the West Wing, the Stadium, and the planning of the Field House and Physical Education Complex, McDaniel had no business manager to oversee the financial affairs and the building programs of the district. He did it all himself and seemed to enjoy the matters of business as much as he did the matters of academics. He was directly involved in many of the design changes in the plans submitted by the architects including those involving aesthetic detail and decor matching. He apparently stood as chief negotiator with the architects in all of the building projects. Before the architects were given permission to proceed with the design of the Field House, McDaniel

personally visited other facilities including those at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Michigan, Northwestern University, Culver Military Academy, and the University of Chicago so that he could tell the architects what kind of facility to design. Architects Perkins, Fellows, Hamilton, and McCormack presented plans reflecting McDaniel's conception of how the new Field House and associated athletic facilities should appear. No small plans these were: there on the blueprints were designs for the Field House (\$275,000), two swimming pools (\$75,000 to \$100,000 each), and five gymnasiums for girls (\$75,000 each). In addition, architects Childs and Smith presented plans for an auditorium with a seating capacity of five thousand and plans for one hundred additional classrooms. McDaniel told of how he had inspected buildings in Detroit and in Evanston that had been designed by Childs and Smith and he also spoke highly of architects Nailer and Rich who had done design work for Evanston Township High School. With such ambitious plans on the table, it is little wonder that McDaniel provided data to prove the economy of operation of the high school. Powerful persons in the community continued to participate in his vision of the school and did not balk at the high price tags they were seeing. One taxpayers' group, the North Oak Park Improvement Association, was devising a plan to prevent citizens from taking action to reduce their taxes. A taxpayers' revolt was apparently in

the making, but McDaniel had the right community members in his corner and the revolt did not materialize.<sup>6</sup>

It was not uncommon for McDaniel to become directly involved in proposing changes in building designs under consideration. The original plans for the Field House included towers extending a considerable height above the roof level at each of the four corners of the building. These towers served no apparent utilitarian purpose and were elements of the design that McDaniel thought the structure could do without, and the money for their construction could be saved. He also became involved in seemingly insignificant details of building design. He recommended that the architects omit a partition between two rooms so that an exercise room could be provided in connection with one of the girls' gymnasiums. He made a presentation to the board on the advisability and the advantages of using combination locks on the wooden lockers in the girls' gymnasium. He suggested that the Field House might need acoustical treatment to keep the sounds of activities from becoming oppressive. He requested that the board consider building a covered passageway from the main building to the new physical education complex for use by students in inclement weather, and he emphasized that ultimately Ontario Street from East Avenue to Scoville would have to be vacated. He told the board that some five changes had to be made in the drawings submitted by E. E. Roberts for renovation of the

existing main building. When a new heating plant was being considered, he told the board it had to be built on North Boulevard near the Northwestern Tracks or under the west end of the stadium. Even stairways occupied his attention, for once he recommended building additional stairways in the main building.<sup>7</sup>

McDaniel's attention to detail involving the physical plant and the financial operation of the school was evident in so much of his work as the leader of Oak Park and River Forest High School. At the 22 October 1925 meeting of the board of education he called the members' attention to the urgent need for new stage wiring. He presented a proposition from a Mr. O'Brien for installing the existing dimmer switches in a new cabinet with a new switchbox at a cost of \$360.00 or with new dimmers at a cost of \$710.00 in accordance with the quotations of the Fuchs Electric Company.<sup>8</sup> When the financial effects of the Great Depression began to have their negative residual in uncollected taxes and the financial future of the school was clouded, he began to look for ways to trim costs. He reported to the board on his attending a conference on the campus of the University of Illinois at Champaign where these cost-saving measures were proposed:

1. Eliminate special teachers of special subjects wherever possible.
2. Pay substitute teachers \$5.00 per day and deduct that amount from the absent teacher's salary.



3. Replace old buildings with new buildings of cheaper structure and larger classrooms.
4. Eliminate mid-year graduations.<sup>9</sup>

At the same meeting he presented statistics showing Oak Park and River Forest High School with 28 pupils per teacher, the highest number of any of the Chicago suburban high schools of reputation. Evanston had 21.2 and New Trier 21. He calculated that if the school had used the same pupil-to-teacher ratio as Evanston, 41 more teachers would be on the payroll at a cost of \$123,000 more in salaries.<sup>10</sup>

But ordinary cost-saving measures would prove to be insufficient in the face of the Great Depression. In April 1932 McDaniel proposed freezing salaries at the monthly rate for 1932-33 and shortening the school year by one month to achieve a 10 percent cost savings in salary.<sup>11</sup> In May 1932 McDaniel reiterated the need for cost savings and made the following proposals:

1. Reduce all salaries by a straight 10 percent.
2. Reduce the stipends of each of the fifteen department heads by \$100.
3. Reduce each teacher's salary by the equivalent of two weeks' pay from the present rate of pay.<sup>12</sup>

He pointed out that other schools were doing similar things to cut costs. New Trier had decided to continue the present salary rate but for nine months instead of ten. LaGrange had decided to do the same as New Trier. Deerfield-Shields in Highland Park had decided to maintain its 1931-32 salary for 1932-33. He also emphasized that Oak Park and River Forest

High School was running a more economical operation than other comparable school districts because of its high pupil-to-teacher ratio. He used the steadily increasing class size during recent years to support his argument. (See Table 3)

1926-27:	22.7
1927-28:	23.9
1928-29:	24.4
1929-30:	24.4
1930-31:	26
1931-32:	29

**Table 3:** Source--Board of Education Minutes

He pointed out that without these increases the payroll for the average of the previous five years would have been \$8,500 more per month. With these data before them, the board of education voted to reduce salaries by 10 percent for the 1932-33 school year, to add a thirty days cancellation clause to the contracts for all teachers, and to develop a contingency plan to close part or all of the school if financially necessary.<sup>13</sup>

Financial problems caused by the Great Depression did not go away quickly. It is therefore not surprising that McDaniel found it necessary to go to the board once more in the spring of 1933 to present further cost-cutting measures for the 1933-34 school year. He suggested these:

1. Reduce the stipends of the heads of smaller departments. ("Their work is light," he said.)
2. Give some of the work of the smaller department heads to the superintendent and the supervisors.

3. Reduce teachers' salaries by 5 percent, the same reduction experienced by other governmental employees.
4. Reorganize the science and manual training programs to eliminate two teachers.<sup>14</sup>

The board ultimately adopted a salary schedule involving graduated reductions for 1933-34 ranging from a high of a 10 percent for those faculty members with a salary of \$3330 or above to a low of a no increase for those faculty members with a salary of \$2000 or below. It is curious to note that the board did not cut McDaniel's salary from the \$11,250 level of the 1932-33 school year. However, his salary had been cut substantially from its high of \$12,500 in the 1930-31 school year to the \$11,250 level for the 1932-33 school year.<sup>15</sup> He would not see the \$12,500 salary level again until the 1937-38 school year--an evidence of just how powerful a grip the Great Depression held on the economy.<sup>16</sup> After the 1933-34 school year, no further salary cuts were necessary. Oak Park and River Forest High School had survived the Great Depression having met all of its payroll obligations. The teachers gave special praise to Superintendent McDaniel and Business Manager Ticktin for their leadership in helping the school through financially difficult times:

We wish to express our appreciation of your generous consideration of us. We feel fortunate in having an administration that through able management succeeds not only in praiseworthy handling of its own affairs, but also in setting an example for other schools and communities.<sup>17</sup>

It was no small measure of the leadership of McDaniel that the *Trapeze* (the school newspaper) chose to pay a special tribute to him in its 12 May 1933 issue, just at the time when the school was beginning to experience some relief from the negative financial impact of the Great Depression. The Class of 1933, which was the twentieth graduating class that McDaniel had seen during his years at Oak Park and River Forest High School, thought it "eminently fitting that the last number of the *Trapeze* for this year shall bear recognition of his career of great leadership."<sup>18</sup> A photo portrait of McDaniel extended across the two middle columns of the four column front page and covered the top one-half of the page. Below the photograph and extending to the bottom of the page was this tribute:

*Si quieris monumentum, circumspice*, "If you seek his monument, look about you." In a way, this famous epitaph of Sir Christopher Wren could apply to our superintendent, Mr. McDaniel, who is about to graduate his twentieth class since the beginning of his memorable service as principal and superintendent of this high school.

Eloquent or extravagant eulogies about him would be unnecessary. You have only to "look about you" to appreciate one of the finest examples of an American high school. You see a school with a student body of over four thousand, high in its standards, run smoothly and efficiently, and imbued with school spirit and a whole-hearted sense of co-operation that is seldom found in such a large institution. If you can appreciate this, you can appreciate the unselfish service rendered by the man who holds the most responsible position, our superintendent, Mr. McDaniel. So much depends on him that the standards of the school and his personal judgment and integrity must naturally be on the same level. So, parallel with each other the high standards of the Oak Park and River Forest High Township High School and the

national reputation of its principal have developed. The great debt of gratitude which we owe him is very evident.

In the superintendent's chair of this school we see a serious man; serious in that his motives have never varied from a sincere desire to do what he considers ultimately best for the school and community. He is what you might call a "progressive conservative"--somewhat of a paradox, but the best possible combination for a man in his position. Mr. McDaniel, the conservative, is a man who proceeds slowly and carefully with his weighty task of administering to the needs of the school. Mr. McDaniel, the progressive, is a man who is ready to accept new ideas after due consideration, frequently introducing them himself. Mr. McDaniel, the "Progressive-conservative," is the man who keeps this high school thoroughly modern without going off on any tangents, any new "fads" or useless equipment. His financial skill in steering this school through the present depression, economizing without lowering any standards, is admirable. Our present high school is larger than it was "before the crash," and equally well equipped; still the expenses have been cut down so that the per-capita cost is lower than that of many schools which lack our facilities. You can trust his judgement [sic] and ability as well as his sincerity and loyalty, making him the kind of completely reliable man you would want for a very serious and responsible position.

To be at the head of a large school, however, requires more than honesty and reliability. Perhaps more important, lying beneath all the qualities we have mentioned, is Mr. McDaniel's sincere love and interest in his work. It is his love, interest, and sympathy for youth that makes it possible for him to devote his life to the guidance of youth.

His outstanding achievements assure us of service in future years that will be as able and efficient as that of past years. It is with well-founded optimism that the Class of '33--the twentieth of his career--anticipates a future of continued worth while [sic]) accomplishment for Oak Park High School under the inspiring guidance of its counsellor and friend, Superintendent M.R. McDaniel.<sup>19</sup>

The seniors were relieved that their school had survived the Great Depression and were thankful to the man

they believed had played a significant role in that survival. The article occupying the entire right column of the front page of the tribute issue of the Trapeze continued to recognize the leadership of McDaniel. It praised him for being "steady and sane, sagacious and serene." It singled out his ability to obtain the cooperation of all the constituents of the school community--the faculty, the board of education, the Parent-Teacher Association, and the student body. It held up his motto, "Doing a thing for the thing itself" as worthy of emulation. It recorded the growth of the school from 1,070 pupils in 1914 to 4,173 in 1933 and noted the accommodation of that increase by the building program, the curriculum changes, and the growth of clubs from one in 1914 to twenty-six in 1933.

Students were quoted in the article in praise of McDaniel. Thomas Carpenter said, "To Mr. McDaniel belongs the credit for the high scholastic standing which the high school has attained during his administration. The discovery of this high rank has been the privilege of all students who have gone on to college, as evidenced in the ready acceptance of credits and the adequacy of foundation for advanced courses....I feel that Oak Park has been most fortunate in having a man who has built for us a high school that is second to none in the United States." Howard Schomer, the president of the Class of 1933 said, "It is to the man McDaniel that I owe the greater debt; for in my

friendship with him I have discovered the great possibilities contained in the unselfish use of intelligence...." Jane Davis, the vice-president of the Senior Class and the president of Girls' Club for 1933 said, "Mr. McDaniel has been a counselor and a good friend of mine. We hear a lot about what a good school Oak Park is, and, come to think of it, who has untiringly kept our school reaching up toward higher goals--Mr. McDaniel. We owe him our respect and admiration."

Former presidents of the board of education also had their say. Mr. H.M. Hobbins said, "Mr. McDaniel rules firmly but most capably. He has surrounded himself with a faculty ranking in ability with most college faculties." Mr. George Harvey Jones said, "The entire community is indebted to him [McDaniel] and his efficient staff for giving us the high school of which we are so proud." Mr. G.W. Hales declared, "One loves to work with Mr. McDaniel because he inspires you to your very best, and then contributes, without reserve, his own energy to help you accomplish that result." And the seated president of the board of education, Mr. A.M. Wolf, was equally complimentary. Said he, "To have worked with Mr. McDaniel in connection with the affairs of the board of education is to know why the administration has put the Oak Park and River Forest Township High School in the front rank of American high schools and kept it there. The general public knows all too little of his careful and painstaking

consideration of every problem of both teachers and pupils. His door is ever open to those seeking advice. Therein lies the secret of his success as an educator. America needs more McDaniels."<sup>20</sup>

Most of these tributes, as did those given at the convocation honoring McDaniel after ten years of leadership at Oak Park, reference the national reputation of the high school and credit McDaniel with establishing it. He talked about the greatness of the school in comparison with other schools in the nation and the community echoed his comments. What would have seemed to be expressions of raw arrogance in a leader of less stature than McDaniel were substantive expressions of confidence as they passed from his lips. His reputation as a national leader in education continued to grow. In March 1933 he was elected president of the National Honor Society, this after his election to the presidency of the National Association of Secondary Schools for 1926-27 and his earlier two year presidency of the high school section of the National Education Association.

Regardless of the national reputation of Marion Ross McDaniel and the school's recognition for excellence, some students in the school could not avoid mischief and McDaniel had to play the role of disciplinarian. In November 1927, he reported to the board that while the high school had made a fine showing in the local Armistice Day Parade, a student named Allan Hadfield had driven an inappropriately painted



Ford car in the parade. Two teachers had told him to get out of the parade line, but he refused. On hearing this report from the principal, the board voted to expel Hadfield.<sup>21</sup> This action was rescinded at the next board meeting in December, apparently because McDaniel had decided to give Hadfield another chance.<sup>22</sup> Students who were not performing academically were also subjected to severe discipline. McDaniel recommended that the board expel one junior boy who had failed all of his school work in the current school year and had passed only two courses with C grades in the previous school year.<sup>23</sup> At another board meeting, McDaniel presented the names of six students who were not doing well academically and recommended that letters of warning of expulsion be sent to them.<sup>24</sup> He labeled the condition of study halls in the cafeteria "extremely serious," even with two of the best teachers in there and stated that discipline and order could not be maintained in so large a room. He suggested to the board that portable dividers be constructed to reduce the size of the room when used for study halls.<sup>25</sup> And he reported to the board on a boy who was said to be intoxicated at all of the basketball games and parties he attends. The parents were called and advised that the school will not tolerate such action.<sup>26</sup>

There was also the problem of a drop in the percent of graduates going on to college, from 85 percent at the beginning of the 1930s to about 55 percent in the middle

1930s. This drop was attributed to the negative impact of the Great Depression on family finances and the consequent inability of families to pay college costs. The idea of Oak Park as a preparatory high school had to give way to a vocational emphasis in the instructional program to help prepare students for gainful employment immediately after high school. To deal with this problem, McDaniel established a job placement department and created a position of placement director.

But the most persistent problem to face McDaniel during his last fifteen years of leadership was the enforcement of the school policy and the state law forbidding student membership in secret societies. On 28 June 1919, the State of Illinois passed legislation forbidding secret societies and prescribed expulsion or suspension and fines of \$25 to \$100 as penalties for those who did join. McDaniel himself urged the legislators to pass this law, probably because it would shore up the existing board policy forbidding sororities and fraternities. Letters were sent out each fall to parents of students warning them about secret societies and including a copy of the 1919 law. The record of one of the board meetings shows the direct involvement of the board in the secret society issue: "Mr. Towle moved that notices of the law concerning fraternities and also a statement of the board of education be sent by registered mail to the parents of all freshmen and all new

incoming students."<sup>27</sup> At the next board meeting, McDaniel reported that 1393 registered letters regarding secret societies had been sent out and receipts for 1346 of them had been returned.

In one instance involving the secret society rule, McDaniel and the board found themselves involved in litigation initiated by a group of parents who sought relief on behalf of their sons who had been suspended and denied diplomas because of their membership in fraternities. This case, which involved one hundred boys, had reached the Appellate Court of Illinois, First District. The appeal was heard by Circuit Court Judge Brewer of Paris, Illinois, who acted more as a mediator in the case than as an appellate judge. He told the appellants and the appellees, "The boys were wrong, their parents were wrong, but let justice be tempered with mercy." The case was settled out of court with the boys formally renouncing their membership in fraternities and the school awarding them their diplomas.<sup>28</sup> This settlement met with high approval in the community. At the board meeting immediately following the 3 September meeting when the settlement was announced, three letters praising the board for its action were read. The first was from Judge Brewer who mediated in the case, the second from Mr. Carl Nyquist who was a community resident, and the third from the Ku Klux Klan. The board minutes revealed no surprise on the part of the board or McDaniel at receiving

the letter from the Klan. The president of the board simply asked McDaniel to acknowledge these letters in a suitable manner.<sup>29</sup>

McDaniel continued his vigilant campaign against fraternities and sororities. Periodically he would remind the board of its duty to enforce this law and occasionally he would consider with them the rationale for the law. Once he read to the board an article that he had found in an Indiana newspaper regarding a disturbance over fraternities. This article stressed the duty of local boards to keep fraternities out of schools. The board was impressed with the message of the article and asked McDaniel to seek publication of a reprint of it in the local newspapers.<sup>30</sup> McDaniel seemed finally to have impressed on the school and the community that he and the board intended to uphold the secret society law, for after 1934 the minutes revealed no more action concerning fraternities and sororities. The final action was taken on 18 October 1934, when a student was expelled for belonging to a fraternity in Austin.<sup>31</sup> The last reference in the minutes to the secret society law was made by McDaniel on 26 November 1935 when he asked the board whether the Junior Service League fell under that law. No answer was recorded in the minutes and the issue appears to have been dropped from further consideration.<sup>32</sup>

It might seem unusual in a discussion of the national reputation of a leader and the school that he led to dwell

on school problems such as the fraternity and sorority issue, the growing student population, the cramped buildings, and the financial crunch of the depression. But it is often in dealing with problems that the virtues of a leader are most evident. Throughout his last fifteen years of service McDaniel was constantly facing challenges that required wise decisions. What should a school do with students who are failing most of their courses? McDaniel once asked the board to adopt a rule that these students be dropped from school enrollment. What should be done to encourage students to belong to school clubs? McDaniel appointed a committee of five faculty members to look into the issue. They discovered that twenty members of the Class of 1925 had not joined any of the school clubs. What should be done to help administration deal with the increased enrollment in the school? McDaniel proposed adding a supervisor of junior and senior girls to the staff. What should be done to discourage students from failing courses? McDaniel proposed that the board require students to pay twenty dollars for repeating a failed course. (The board approved this proposal, but later changed the fee for a repeated course to ten dollars and still later to ten dollars for the second repetition of a course.) What could be done in the midst of the Great Depression to raise funds to increase the size of the facilities to accommodate increased student enrollment? McDaniel proposed seeking

financial assistance from the federal government where under the Public Works Administration (PWA) up to 45 percent of the funding required for building would be supplied by the government. (The board, probably with good Republican ethics, worried that this source of funding might not be a bargain because of the need to comply with federal regulations and therefore decided not to make application to the PWA.) Up until the last year of his life he kept advising the board of the need for more space to relieve the cramped conditions, stating that the school had needed extra classrooms for the last ten years and that it now needed two additional private offices for the deans.<sup>33</sup>

No problem during the last fifteen years of McDaniel's leadership proved to be more irritating to him than the one involving the practice of District 97 of sending mid-year graduates to the high school. This practice created significantly larger classes in the high school for the second semester of each school year (in some years as many as 450 more students were in the high school during the second semester), and it appeared to be sending ill-prepared students to the high school. In December 1931, McDaniel proposed to the board that parents of mid-year graduates be notified that their students were expected to graduate in four years. He added that the high school might want to tell parents to keep their mid-year entrants out of school for one-half year and have them begin in the fall of a year with

a year-end graduating class. The board took no action on these proposals.<sup>34</sup> In December 1932 he told the board that the high school needed to control its extraordinary expenses associated with the mid-year entrants. With the Great Depression eroding the school's financial resources, this was a reasonably attractive argument for the board, and the members appeared to listen with interest to the following proposals:

1. Permit only a certain number of grade school entrants at mid-year.
2. Limit mid-year entrants to register for one-half day's academic work.
3. Persuade the District 97 grade schools to terminate the practice of mid-year graduations.

The board's response to these proposals was to arrange a conference with the District 97 board and administration.<sup>35</sup> In September 1932 the board voted to accept only 150 mid-year graduates for the 1932-33 school year and to accept no mid-year graduates for the 1933-34 school year if the difficult economic conditions persisted.<sup>36</sup> To this action the District 97 administration responded that it favored mid-year graduations and would continue to send these graduates as mid-year entrants of the high school. The high school board then asked McDaniel to prepare a report showing the educational and financial objections to mid-year graduations in an effort to persuade District 97 to change from this practice.<sup>37</sup>

In September 1933 the high school board passed a resolution "in the spirit of cooperation" to accept up to one hundred mid-year entrants, effective January 1935, and to accept all of the mid-year graduates in January 1934.<sup>38</sup> Unable to persuade District 97 to change its practice, McDaniel had to compromise on what he personally believed to be a bad educational practice. But without the economic argument of the Great Depression and with some relief in the size of classes in the high school, he could not afford to press a personal belief that was producing considerable animosity in the grade schools of Oak Park. He did the wise thing and settled for "half a loaf" to keep peace between the two districts. Such compromise in the face of overwhelming resistance is the mark of wise leadership.

It is difficult to say whether the particular leadership style of McDaniel himself or whether the remarkable quality of the academic institution he led was responsible for the rise to national prominence of both. It is probably best to consider it a matter of symbiosis, with both stronger because of the close relationship in which they existed. But the nation did take note of what was happening in Oak Park, and at least one prominent newspaper celebrated it. Chicago **Tribune** journalist Ruth De Young wrote extensively about McDaniel and Oak Park and River Forest High School in the 17 May 1931 issue:

An executive and scholar is Marion Ross McDaniel, who presides over Oak Park and River Forest Township High



School, frequently called one of the "best" three or four high schools in the country. In a quiet, dignified, and orderly manner he is performing well what he terms his biggest job--that of surrounding himself with teachers who will be allowed complete independence in framing and carrying out their respective programs.

Since Mr. McDaniel became principal of the west suburban institution in the fall of 1914 he has provided a faculty recognized for its personality as well as a fine background in education--one that can ably fill its vocation of preparing 85 per cent of the members of each graduating class for college.<sup>39</sup>

This article went on to praise the class supervision system which McDaniel instituted at the very same board meeting at which he had been appointed Superintendent/Principal:

Perhaps no one feature of the high school better reflects the leadership of the principal or the progressive methods of the school than the class supervision system inaugurated by Mr. McDaniel several years ago. It is this plan, often referred to by faculty members and visitors as the outstanding characteristic of Oak Park High, that provides intimate contact between teachers and students and stimulates a friendliness between faculty and student body that is unusual.<sup>40</sup>

The article singled out these beliefs of McDaniel as central to his leadership:

Mr. McDaniel is a firm believer in the importance of a well-rounded education, yet he calls scholarship as the prime requisite in early training. Through his personal contact with boys and girls and also by means of the system of supervisors, he encourages scholastic leaders to take part in athletics and extra curricular activities. No better proof of the high scholarship maintained at Oak Park can be found than in the fact that graduates who have entered the University of Illinois during the last 12 years have attained an average in their freshman year of one to two per cent higher than in their high school course.

Again no one of the boys and girls who have taken

college board examinations for entrance into an eastern institution has failed the tests in the last six years. Eight graduates of Oak Park High School were elected to Phi Beta Kappa in their junior or senior years at various midwestern and eastern colleges and universities this spring.<sup>41</sup>

Athletics and activities were praised by the *Tribune* writer as special virtues of the institution. The Field House, the swimming pools, and the gymnasiums were held up as extraordinary features of the physical plant that translated into exceptional opportunities for the students. McDaniel's philosophy of activities was captured well in his statement to the *Tribune*: "We have some thirty clubs in the school. Frequently I feel that these activities train the students to be more independent and creative than classroom work. We have no student government, yet the boys and girls decide practically all of the problems that arise. It is a matter of student participation and educated public opinion."<sup>42</sup>

Much of the public acclaim of the school appears to have been the result of its one man public relations program featuring Marion Ross McDaniel himself. He took "his show on the road" early in his leadership of the school and continued to take it there for all of the years he held the office of superintendent and principal. The outside professional involvements of his first ten years at Oak Park were summarized in Chapter I, but they represented only a beginning. The board minutes, the *Trapeze*, and the local newspapers reported regularly on McDaniel's outside

professional involvements of his last fifteen years. In November 1925 McDaniel told the board that he had taken a trip East recently as a delegate to the Convention of the Committee on College Board Examinations following which he visited many of the leading high schools in the East.<sup>43</sup> In March 1926 he participated in a meeting of educators in Washington D.C. at which he had the good fortune of winning a new Corona typewriter by having the nearest guess of the number of ball bearings in a square vessel. McDaniel said his guess of 20,400 (the exact number was 20,700) was arrived at by using his knowledge of higher mathematics.<sup>44</sup> As referenced in Chapter I, during the 1926-27 school year he was president of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. As president, he headed an organization of 2200 high school principals from all parts of the United States. He had served the organization in various capacities prior to his presidency, including chairman of the program committee, vice president, and founder of the National Honor Society. According to the *Trapeze* of 9 October 1926, "Oak Park teachers feel that his election to the presidency is a testimonial to his ability."<sup>45</sup>

In April 1928 McDaniel reported that he had been recently informed by Harvard University that Oak Park and River Forest High School was selected as one of ten in the United States to be given a copy of the biography of President Eliot to be awarded to the junior boy excelling in

scholarship, character, and leadership.<sup>46</sup> In January 1928 McDaniel went to New York City where he participated in the school and college conference in English. He was one of the few public school administrators invited to the conference which focused on the subject, "What Our High School Graduates Thought of the English They Had in High School as Compared with English in Eastern Colleges." In most cases the students reported that their high school English instruction was satisfactory but that in some cases they were drilled too much on mechanical work and not given enough opportunity to do creative writing.<sup>47</sup>

In March 1928 McDaniel traveled to Boston to attend the annual meeting of the National Education Association for which he served on the Executive Committee of Secondary School Superintendents. One of the featured speakers at the conference was Cameron Beck, Personnel Director for the New York Stock Exchange, who spoke on the topic, "How to Bring Schools Closer to Business and Business Closer to Schools." McDaniel himself spoke at the meeting on the topic of promoting international understanding through education. Other topics of the conference were character building and the weaknesses of American high schools as seen by President Lowell of Harvard. He said they cost too much, they try to teach too many things, and they do not teach quickly enough. It is interesting to note that while McDaniel was in Boston, he and his wife had breakfast at the Copley Plaza with Oak

Park and River Forest High School graduates Virginia Carr and Margaret Williams (students at Radcliffe), and with Lawrence Johnson, Douglas Pillinger, and Gordon Looney (students at Harvard).<sup>48</sup> Shortly after this meeting the high school board of education received a letter from the National Education Association granting Marion Ross McDaniel a life membership in the N.E.A., calling McDaniel "an outstanding figure in all educational work." Mrs. Lindberg received the same honor with him.<sup>49</sup> It was only one year later that McDaniel was back in Boston to interview teaching candidates there and in other East Coast locations.<sup>50</sup>

McDaniel's leadership work with the National Education Association and the National Honor Society continued uninterrupted throughout his life, but that did not prevent him from assuming additional leadership responsibilities on the state and national level. In April 1932 he went to Oberlin College to give a talk to students of the college and teachers in the surrounding area on the subject, "The Teacher as Lamplighter." The theme of his talk was based on words spoken by Earl Gray during the black hours of World War I when many besieged territories were forced to live in darkness for better protection. In despair, Earl Gray made the statement, "The lamps are going out all over the world. We may never live to see them lit again." McDaniel held that it is the task of the teachers of the present day to light the lamps of literature, religion,

art, drama, and all types of culture which have either gone out or are flickering feebly. Following his talk, McDaniel attended a dinner at the Oberlin Inn where he dined with educational leaders from the Oberlin vicinity.<sup>51</sup> Immediately upon his return to Oak Park, McDaniel received word that he had been appointed as an Illinois representative to the Council of Advisors of the National Survey of School Finance. This survey was being conducted under the auspices of the National Commission of Education of the Department of Interior. Scheduled at a time when the Great Depression impacted schools most profoundly, this survey had as its major purpose to identify those school programs that produced the highest attainments in student achievement with the most economical expenditure of public funds.<sup>52</sup>

Given the success of McDaniel in managing a program of high student achievement with low per pupil costs, he was clearly a good choice of an administrator to represent Illinois on the Council of Advisors. For fifteen years from 1924 to 1939, McDaniel served on the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This commission, which had fifty members (only eight of whom were from secondary schools), determined which colleges and universities in the Middle West would be put on the accredited list of the North Central Association.<sup>53</sup> In May 1937, McDaniel was invited to participate in a meeting of the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C.,

just one more invitation that in itself bore a compliment to the man.<sup>54</sup>

Probably no greater national recognition came to McDaniel than the one his death prevented him from experiencing. In October of 1939, he received an invitation from Secretary of State Cordell Hull to take part in a conference on inter-American relations in the field of education scheduled to meet in Washington, D.C., on November 9 and 10. This conference was under the auspices of the Division of Cultural Relations which was created by the Department of State to assist private and public organizations in developing a better understanding between peoples of the United States and those of the other countries in North and South America. In his letter to McDaniel, Mr. Hull explained the conference this way:

One of the chief functions of the department in this field is to extend good offices of government to public and private institutions and organizations which have long been active in efforts to develop better understanding between our people and those of other countries. Far from supplanting the valuable work being done by these public and private agencies, it is our hope that the department may assist in making their activities more effective by serving as a clearing house of information and a center of coordination.

One of the most significant activities in which the department is interested is that covering the field of educational activities. In working out those aspects of the broad program which deal with the promotion of educational interchange, it is essential that the department have the counsel of distinguished individuals in this field.

I am sure you will agree that the development of firm and friendly understanding between American nations

has never been more important than it is today, and I earnestly hope that it will be possible for you to accept this invitation.<sup>55</sup>

Accept the invitation he did indeed, but he died just nine days short of the first day of the conference.

In an interview with Kathryn McDaniel on 2 August 1989, this author asked her if she remembered the invitation from Secretary of State Cordell Hull. "Oh yes," Kathryn said. "We discussed it as a family. We said wasn't that nice. He said, yes, nice to be recognized." Regarding his humility, his daughter went on, "You couldn't prove it by me that he was puffed up about anything. He was puffed up when a student did well in the U of C exams, for instance. He'd get puffed up about that."

As pointed out in the earlier chapters of this work McDaniel related with pride to the board the outstanding achievements of "his" students. Their higher averages at University of Illinois, their outstanding performances on the University of Chicago exams, and their honors in the Ivy League schools were all a source of his being a bit "puffed up" as his daughter Kathryn phrased it.

In his report to the community after fifteen years of service to the school, he presented a variety of statistics celebrating the achievement of Oak Park and River Forest High School students. A study done by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary schools grouped Oak Park students with ten schools of similar size, cultural



opportunities and financial resources. In this group of ten, Oak Park graduates ranked lowest in percentage of failures at 2.7 percent. The next lowest in the ranking was 4.5 percent and some of the schools were as high as 10 percent. Another study quoted by McDaniel in his report showed that over the last ten years, Oak Park graduates in the University of Illinois had each year made higher grade point averages at the University than they had at the high school. In his report he also quoted this letter from the University of Chicago:

Oak Park High School graduates in the University of Chicago lead in scholarship all other groups from high schools which have sent 100 or more students to the Midway in the last five-year period, a study just completed by George R. Moon, assistant to the University recorder, shows.

The leadership of Oak Park is determined on two bases, the grades made by its graduates, and the number on probation for the five-year period. Where some schools average as high as 25 percent on probation, Oak Park's representation on the list has been only .5 percent. The scholastic standard at the University of Chicago is recognized as the highest in the country, a fact that makes the Oak Park record all the more creditable.

Oak Park's leadership in scholastic work adds one more achievement to the village's record on the Midway, for its graduates have been prominent in campus and athletic activities. More captains of teams have come from Oak Park than from any other school in the last ten years.

The board added this to the report: "Such comparative studies are unanswerable proof of the high standards of scholarship and efficiency of the teaching maintained under the leadership of Mr. McDaniel."<sup>56</sup> Such objective data

redeemed McDaniel from any charge of being puffed up.

Besides, he was celebrating his students as Kathryn said he would.

It was the board, the community, the state, and the nation that celebrated Marion Ross McDaniel.

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>Board of Education Minutes, Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1924-1939 (Passim).

<sup>2</sup>Minutes, 23 October 1924.

<sup>3</sup>Minutes, 3 November 1925.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Minutes, 28 October 1924 to 2 March 1926 (Passim).

<sup>7</sup>Minutes, 14 April 1927 to 19 February 1931 (Passim).

<sup>8</sup>Minutes, 22 October 1925.

<sup>9</sup>Minutes, 17 December 1931.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Minutes, 13 April 1932.

<sup>12</sup>Minutes, 5 May 1932.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Minutes, 12 April, 1933.

<sup>15</sup>Minutes, 25 April, 1933.

<sup>16</sup>"Service Record Card," Marion Ross McDaniel, Archives File, Oak Park and River Forest High School. (Includes record of McDaniel's annual salary rates for the years 1912-1939.)

<sup>17</sup>Minutes, 8 May 1934.

<sup>18</sup>"Mr. McDaniel to See Twentieth Class Graduate in June," *The Trapeze*, 12 May 1933.

<sup>19</sup>"A Staunch Friend of Youth," *The Trapeze*, 12 May 1933.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Minutes, 15 November 1927.

<sup>22</sup>Minutes, 15 December 1927.

<sup>23</sup>Minutes, 22 March 1928.

<sup>24</sup>Minutes, 21 January 1937.

<sup>25</sup>Minutes, 16 October 1930.

<sup>26</sup>Minutes, 26 April, 1928.

<sup>27</sup>Minutes, 21 June 1927.

<sup>28</sup>Minutes, 3 September 1926.

<sup>29</sup>Minutes, 23 September 1926.

<sup>30</sup>Minutes, 5 December 1927.

<sup>31</sup>Minutes, 18 October 1934.

<sup>32</sup>Minutes, 26 November 1935.

<sup>33</sup>Minutes, 1924-1929 (Passim).

<sup>34</sup>Minutes, 17 December 1931.

<sup>35</sup>Minutes, 18 January 1932.

<sup>36</sup>Minutes, 22 September 1932.

<sup>37</sup>Minutes, 22 November 1932.

<sup>38</sup>Minutes, 19 October 1933.

<sup>39</sup>Ruth DeYoung, "Oak Park High Chief Believes in Scholarship," *The Chicago Tribune*, 17 May 1931.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Minutes, November 19, 1925.

<sup>44</sup>"Mr. McDaniel's Guess Wins New Typewriter," *The Trapeze*, 12 March 1926.

<sup>45</sup>"Goes to New York for Principals' Meeting," *The Trapeze*, 9 October 1926.

<sup>46</sup>Minutes, 28 April 1927.

<sup>47</sup>Minutes, 19 January 1928.

<sup>48</sup>"Mr. McDaniel Returns from N.E.A. Meeting," *The Trapeze*, 16 March 1928.

<sup>49</sup>Minutes, 3 March 1928.

<sup>50</sup>Minutes, 25 April 1929.

<sup>51</sup>"McDaniel to Speak to Teachers Today at Oberlin College," *The Trapeze*, 15 April 1932.

<sup>52</sup>"Board of Education," *The Trapeze*, 15 April 1932.

<sup>53</sup>"McDaniel Aids in Accredited List," *The Trapeze*, 31 March 1939.

<sup>54</sup>Minutes, 22 April 1937

<sup>55</sup>"McDaniel Summoned to Washington Conference," *The Oak Leaves*, 19 October 1939.

<sup>56</sup>"15 Years of High School," *The Oak Leaves*, 9 March 1929.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUDDEN DEATH

*A noble career in school leadership ends abruptly*

On Thursday afternoon, 26 October 1939, Kathryn McDaniel came home from her day of work as head librarian for Swift and Company. The house was empty except for Pearl, the maid for the McDaniel household. Kathryn asked Pearl, "Where is everybody?" to which Pearl responded, "At the doctor's office. Your dad is not feeling well." Kathryn drove immediately to the doctor's office to learn about her father's condition. Once there, she heard the doctor's advice that Mr. McDaniel be taken to a hospital for observation. Kathryn helped her father to the car and she, her father and her mother began the drive to Presbyterian St. Luke's Hospital. Kathryn recalled that her father "practically blacked out" on the way down to the hospital, but once there he seemed to rally. He was admitted for observation and tests and remained in the hospital on Saturday, 28 October, Sunday, 29 October, and Monday, 30 October. Because he appeared to have regained his strength and because no particular problem had been identified, he was scheduled to be released on Tuesday, 31 October. Shortly before 8:00 a.m. on the thirty-first, a nurse discovered him

dead in his hospital bed. Heart failure was the official reason given for his death.<sup>1</sup>

Kathryn recalled the last time she saw her father alive. It was on Monday evening, 30 October, the night before he was to be released from the hospital. Said she, "I took my aunt--mother's sister--who had been visiting us, down to the hospital on the way to the train or whatever she was taking [to return home], and she went in and said goodbye to him, and I also knew Hazel [the aunt] was the kind of person who hugged people and mussed them up, so after I got rid of her I came back and went into dad's room and said, 'Dad, would you like me to comb your hair for you?' He said, 'Oh gosh yes!' And that's the last I saw him. He was gone in the morning. Sometime during the early morning hours he was asleep but alive. The next time the nurse came in two hours, he was dead. Well, he choked to death--was the plaque on the artery in the heart just stopped all the blood. You know blood thickens when it gets troubled and he just was choked to death, really, I suppose, although there were no signs."<sup>2</sup>

News of the death of Mr. McDaniel spread rapidly through the community with the initial effect of profound silence followed by an outpouring of tributes that in their number, sentiment, and intensity are nothing short of remarkable. Memorial and funeral services were set immediately for Thursday, 2 November 1939. School was

canceled for the day and a memorial service planned by the student council and the senior class was scheduled to take place in the auditorium at 10:00 a.m. For one half hour during this service, the students sat in reverential silence to pay their last tribute to their fallen leader. Attendance at this service was so large that both the music hall and the lunchroom had to be used to seat the overflow crowd.<sup>3</sup> The body of McDaniel lay in state in the high school auditorium from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. when it was moved for the 3:00 p.m. service to the First Presbyterian Church, the church where he had been a member for all of his Oak Park years and an elder when he died. Dr. J.W.G. Ward officiated at the services. Interment took place on Friday 3 November 1939, in Rushville, Indiana, in the Spurrier (McDaniel's wife's maiden name) family cemetery plot.<sup>4</sup>

The auditorium memorial service was reported in the *Oak Leaves* with a special sensitivity and awe:

Boys and girls of Oak Park and River Forest High School filled the auditorium Thursday morning last and gave a half hour of hushed reverence to the memory of their departed principal, who died on Tuesday, October 31. Dr. Ward read from the scriptures and in the prayer that followed asked his young audience to join in repeating the prayer of Our Lord and so gave each boy and girl a part in the memorial service. Dr. Coe talked with intimate understanding of Mr. McDaniel as his friends and his school knew him. Mrs. Esther Hart with Stanley Martin as accompanist sang. In the music hall and in one of the large study halls, where public address systems had been installed for the occasion, an overflow audience of underclassmen listened to the service.

"Surrounded by crowds, he never forgot that the crowd was made up of individuals." In those words Dr. Coe



found the key to the analysis of Mr. McDaniel's character, his unfailing interest in every type of boy and girl--the athlete, the delinquent, the born student. This interest was expressed not in any sentimental way, but in a steady effort to find out what was best for a boy and to help him to achieve his own best. Dr. Coe spoke of Mr. McDaniel's modesty, his quiet rejection of publicity or honors, symbolized by the fact that the title which his doctor's degree gave him was never used in the school and seldom in the community.

The abundant flowers on the velvet-curtained platform, arranged as they were for color harmony and unity of design, were the offerings of the entire school--student body, engineers, business staff, janitors, electricians, clerical staff, teachers, Board of Education, and Parent-Teacher Association. A committee of students and teachers working together had made a peaceful bower of color amid which rested the body of the departed on the very spot from which he had so often addressed an audience of exuberant youths--now silent in their sense of loss.

For more than an hour after the close of the service boys and girls of the high school, in an unbroken line passed across the platform, pausing for a farewell to their lost leader. School did not keep that day, but between the hours of 11 and 2 when the body lay in state, practically all of the 3,700 students had passed through its doors.

During those hours from 11 to 2, while many of the graduates of the school, parents of pupils, citizens of the community, as well as youth came to honor Supt. McDaniel, a committee of students acted as ushers and hall patrols and kept an honor guard on the platform beside the dead.<sup>5</sup>

It is clearly risky to measure the worth of a man by what is said about him on the occasion of his death or at his funeral service, and this writer would not do so. But because there is in the tributes spoken and written on the occasion of McDaniel's death such similarity to the tributes spoken and written about him in life, they take on a significance beyond the uniform panegyric or encomium of a

memorial service. For this reason it is important to examine these tributes in this attempt to distill out the essence of the life and leadership of Mr. McDaniel.

The *Oak Leaves* considered his sphere of influence in Oak Park:

Mr. McDaniel probably had a wider acquaintance and had dealt with more people in Oak Park than any other man who ever lived here, in business, the professions, or in politics. He gave diplomas to 11,260 graduates in the 25 years he was principal of the school and it is estimated that nearly 20,000 pupils came under his influence at Oak Park and River Forest High School. He became acquainted with many of their parents and his name was on thousands of tongues. Moreover, he took part in numerous community and church affairs here and in educational conferences in other parts of the country. In his lighter moments he played golf and he was a popular member of the Oak Park Rotary Club for many years.<sup>6</sup>

The *Oak Parker* and its twin the *River Forester* emphasized his national reputation after noting his local importance:

He was an elder of the Presbyterian church, member of the Rotary Club of Oak Park, and the Judd Club, an organization of schoolmen around Chicago, past president of the National Association of High School Principals, and founder and past president of the National Honor Society. So well known was Mr. McDaniel in educational circles that he had been invited to Washington by Secretary of State Cordell Hull for a conference on the cultural relations of nations, particularly with South America.<sup>7</sup>

The *Trapeze* simply copied the tribute that had been written a year earlier on the occasion of McDaniel's graduating his twenty-fifth class from the high school. That tribute is represented in its entirety in Chapter IV of this

biography; it is significant that the editors decided that something written for him during his life was appropriate for him in his death. Several lines are worthy of repetition here:

His irreproachable principles, his lofty ideals, and his untiring efforts in behalf of better education developed a tradition and precedent which promise continued progress and success for the great ship that he captained for more than twenty-five years. So it is with a sincere sense of gratitude that present and past passengers fire silent, mental guns of tribute for what was done for them by Superintendent M. R. McDaniel, past commander-in-chief of S. S. Oak Park River Forest Township High School."<sup>a</sup>

Tributes and pieces done "in memoriam" came from throughout the community and across the country. Lewy Warren writing in the 6 November 1939 issue of *The Rotary Razz* celebrated McDaniel as a reserved, somewhat austere, associate in the Oak Park Rotary Club: (The initials W.J. are in reference to W.J. Hamilton who spoke the tribute honoring McDaniel at the 1 November 1939 meeting of the club.)

In Rotary, where the professional shell can crack and drop off, and where men meet as men, the opportunity for understanding is greatly increased. But because of the dignity and decorum implanted in Ross through his early training, even Rotarians had difficulty in getting beneath this exterior. By many he was held in respect, or even awe, to such an extent that they found it difficult to address him as "Ross," and he, in turn, found it difficult to accept such informal friendliness.

To some, in times past, he confided that it was hard for him to adjust to this freedom in Rotary; and it is an added testimony to his character that he stayed with us instead of stepping out because he couldn't easily understand us. That he profited by this association is probable--that Rotary profited is

certain.

With a beautiful tribute to the ability which made possible his service for more than a quarter of a century in one of the most important posts in the villages, W. J. reviewed the qualities which are the bases of such service. The student's creed, of which Ross was the author, expressed also his own rule of conduct: "I will blot out of my life the failures that come from wasted hours, and write into it the successes that come from time well spent. I will keep life's pages clean, and fill them with the records of knowledge gained. I will fix my eyes on the goal of my ambition, and hold my hand to its task. I will work hard, hope high, and live up to the best that is in me. I can write at the end, well done."

As a lighter note, W.J. recalled the birthday party of but a week ago when Ross, being one of the celebrants, sat at the small table and entered into the fun and banter in a surprising way. This incident will remain a cherished memory with those who sat near by. But none of us will soon forget the quiet dignity and sterling qualities which were his marked characteristics.<sup>9</sup>

There is in this tribute a record of the discomfort that McDaniel felt in a setting where people "let themselves loose." He was apparently much more comfortable when engaged in formal conversations and when formal address was the expected mode of conversation. For members of the Rotary Club to be surprised at McDaniel's engaging in "fun and banter" at a recent birthday party, there must have been an enormous reserve in his relationships with club members. W.J. Hamilton commented further on the "reserved" McDaniel in the tribute he spoke on 1 November 1939:

His quiet reserve and dignity which he had acquired through the early discipline of his life had so conditioned him that we often looked upon him as a rather reserved personality. On one occasion he told me how difficult it was for him when he first joined this Rotary Club to become accustomed to calling

people by their first names and to stand up under the impact of the friendly hand on his shoulder with a voice calling him "Mac." He also confided that it was with some consternation that he listened to Otto Braese lead in the singing of the Rotary Club that well known song entitled "Old McDaniel Had a Farm." It was not so much the singing of the song by the Rotarians that concerned Ross as it was the possibility of this song becoming a part of the repertoire of the high school chorus.<sup>10</sup>

How a man so ill at ease with being at ease could have achieved so much as superintendent/principal of a high school in a socially-minded suburb of Chicago is something of a puzzle. Perhaps it was that the community expected rigid reserve on the part of its chief school official and valued what it saw in McDaniel, and perhaps the discomfort McDaniel felt at Rotary meetings came from a sense that his image was on the verge of "falling from grace" in the eyes of the community. But he never fell, and the community loved to praise him for his leadership in "the growth and development of the Oak Park and River Forest High School as well as the nation-wide recognition of his leadership in the field of American education."<sup>11</sup> His immortality, as W.J. Hamilton saw it, was assured by "his moral force, his sound scholarship, and the high ideals which served to standardize his service in the field of education. It is in the memory of this service so well rendered that he will continue to live on as long as the memory of those who knew him, who came in contact with him, who responded to his instructional leadership, and who have been touched in any way by his personal influence, shall endure."<sup>12</sup>

Two of the supervisors who worked closely with McDaniel, Miss Weckel and Mr. Bobbitt, also remarked on the reserved nature and high achievement of their leader:

As associates of Mr. McDaniel for many years, we think of him as a sympathetic friend, a wise counsellor, an inspiring executive, and an accomplished educator. Behind a quiet Puritan exterior he possessed a great heart which made him loved by pupils, parents and teachers. His unerring judgment was sought by pupils in their college plans, in finding jobs, in regard to their intimate personal problems; by teachers with manifold questions; and by his fellow educators in the high schools and colleges throughout America. As an executive, he had the rare ability of inspiring students and teachers to maintain a high standard of achievement.<sup>13</sup>

This reserved, Puritan-like characteristic, was to many an external evidence of the internal discipline and dignity of the man. Loura B. Woodruff, Head of the Latin Department, wrote, "Ever eager to give our young people the best that could be given, he devoted his life to fostering and maintaining those ideals of truth and honor for which the school has come to stand." Lois B. Walker, Head of the German Department, wrote, "The teachers who have worked under Mr. McDaniel's guidance are thinking today of his high achievements in this school. They realize how he has fostered scholarship and character among the students...they feel the loss of a man who stood squarely for the right-- a man of rare honor." Thomas Carpenter, Dean of Men at Knox College and an Oak Park High School graduate, wrote this tribute:

Occasionally a man lives his life in such a way that he builds himself a memorial which makes words seem

futile at a time such as this. Such a life has been that of Dr. McDaniel. In Oak Park and River Forest High School and the thousands of students who have been educated under his guidance there stands living tributes to his many claims to greatness....His integrity, his courage, his ability in his profession, and his devotion to his task and to the people he served made that rare combination which we need so much in our public life. I feel confident that I know the heights to which public officialdom can attain. I have known Dr. McDaniel.<sup>14</sup>

It was the moral dimension of McDaniel's personality and the values he incorporated into the educational program at Oak Park and River Forest High School that were the focus of the remarks by Albert M. Wolf, President of the board of education when McDaniel died. Not surprisingly, Mr. Wolf began his remarks with a quotation from the New Testament:

Well done, Thou Good and Faithful Servant.

We in Oak Park and River Forest today mourn the loss of a truly great man, Marion Ross McDaniel, for twenty-five years superintendent and principal of the institution of which we are all very proud--The Oak Park and River Forest High Township High School. His light, however, will continue to shine as those thousands who have graduated carry the torch of true Americanism--which he lighted for them--wherever they go in this great land of ours.

The high place in secondary education in America attained by the Oak Park and River Forest Township High School is the result of the work of a great educational leader who in his quiet and unostentatious way imbued his staff of excellent teachers with the spirit of doing their best at all times. Under him the individual who wanted to do more and greater things found sympathetic and understanding guidance. He had the happy faculty of developing leaders and workers at the same time--and how we need that quality in our educators today with the rest of the world being pulled down by selfish-isms. Because of the high standards set by the school some folks may have felt that Mr. McDaniel's interests were only with the brightest

students. Such, however, is not the case, for he was just as interested in seeing all students in good physical trim with those in top form representing the school in athletic contests. Then, too, he was constantly striving to give the best training to those who excelled in manual work and to whom English and Algebra formed impossible hurdles in their scholastic advancement. In a word, his program was to develop a complete youth by tried and true methods and not by passing fads and fancies.

A statement to the school newspaper *The Trapeze* May 1938, on the occasion of the senior class recognizing Mr. McDaniel's "Twenty-five Years of Service" I believe express the feeling of every board member who worked with Mr. McDaniel over the years and I therefore quote it here: "I count as one of the priceless rewards of a civic duty performed as a High School Board Member, the liberal education I have received from Mr McDaniel in the many board meetings in which we have harmoniously worked together in over a decade. Never domineering, always willing to cooperate, never shirking responsibility, always upholding the intrinsic values of education, ready to discipline when necessary, and always doing more than he would ask anyone else to do, briefly summarizes why he has been successful in building up a great institution of learning, acknowledged as such from coast to coast and on all the ships at sea.

In closing, these words of the poet seem more than fitting: "He kept his honesty and truth/ His independent tongue and pen/ And moved in manhood as in youth/ Pride of his fellow men."<sup>15</sup>

Pride of his fellow men indeed. It seemed that whatever organization he became part of, he was thrust into some leadership position. He was named a high school principal in Rushville, Indiana, when he was only twenty-nine years old. He was appointed principal of Oak Park and River Forest High School after only a year and a half on the faculty. He joined the Presbyterian Church in Oak Park and became an elder. He participated in the formation of the National Association of Secondary Schools



and ten years later was elected president. He joined the National Education Association and was elected president of the Secondary School Section. He helped form the National Honor Society and served the organization as president. Why did this man become the recognized leader of virtually any organization that he joined? The questions asked at the beginning of this work on the life of McDaniel must be asked once more after having studied that life: What were the qualities that thrust Marion Ross McDaniel into so many leadership positions and that made him so effective and respected for twenty-five years of leadership in a single school district? Why was he singled out for honors after ten years of service, after fifteen, after twenty, and again after twenty-five? Why did his memorial services attract so many persons? Answers to these questions are implied in the record of McDaniel's life as recorded in this biographical study, but such a life begs for formulation of direct answers proceeding from a careful analysis of his complicated and successful life. Those direct answers will be attempted in the chapter that follows. Here, after exploring the public reactions to the death of McDaniel, it is appropriate to consider the family reactions to the sudden death of a husband and father. At the conclusion of an interview with Kathryn, McDaniel's daughter, this writer asked her to reflect on the sudden death of her father. Her response and the ensuing questions and answers follow:

**Kathryn:** Father was the apex of our triangle. Father, mother, daughter [pointing at the top, the bottom left, and the bottom right of an imaginary triangle]. Hardly any interchanges between mother and me. It all went to him. As a matter of fact, when my father died, I was not really acquainted with my mother. I loved her and respected her and all that sort of thing, but I didn't really know what she was all about. It took me two or three years to get that closeness that daughters usually have with their mothers.

**Interviewer:** And that occurred after your father's death?

**Kathryn:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Any final thing you want to tell me about his...

**Kathryn:** I loved him!

**Interviewer:** That's beautiful.

**Kathryn:** I adored him. The only thing that made me able to go on was to think dad would want me to do it this way. That's how I happened to get a hold of the financial things. He'd taken me to the bank on Saturday mornings and he'd show me how to clip coupons and make the entries on deposit

slips. I never had to guess at anything. The only thing I can remember that was funny about this whole thing, funny in retrospect, when dad went to the hospital he had his monthly salary check in his pocket and he gave it to mother, signed it, and said, "Now put it in my account." Well, we didn't have time to. So when I spoke to my mother over the phone that morning after the doctor had called me [with the news of father's death], I said [to mother], "Do you have dad's salary check?" She said, "Yes." And I said I want you to meet me at the front door with that and I'll deposit it, so I did. The bank knew [father had died], but they accepted it. But you see, the minute I found out he was dead, I was responsible for everything.

**Interviewer:** You knew he wanted you to be.

**Kathryn:** He expected me to. He had told me, "Now I don't know whether mother will live forever or for a day, but whatever you do, you take care of her." He also told me never let anybody, if he was sick, in the room except the doctor. He said, "I might go out of my head like my dad did and I don't want anybody seeing that." Of course there was no occasion for that, but I was to protect him from certain things, and I was to protect my mother forever.

**Interviewer:** Your feelings as a daughter toward him--you

said you loved him. That is just a stronger form of the essential respect for him I hear from so many who knew him.

**Kathryn:** They called him "The Silver Fox."

**Interviewer:** Why was he such a successful leader of a school?

**Kathryn:** Because he was such a successful human.

**Interviewer:** What you felt as a daughter toward him is what the school felt toward him. The students, the faculty were his family. It brought results. When you look at modern theories of leadership that say do this, this, and this--you go by a formula as if leadership were something you can do by formula. And this is what I'm persuaded of that your father was a man who by his own nature, his natural behavior, just was a leader. Perhaps I'm saying he was born-born to lead.

**Kathryn:** If he had been in the army, I hate to think what an officer he would have been.

**Interviewer:** Why do you say that? Do you think he would have been too gentle?

**Kathryn:** No.

**Interviewer:** He would have been a wonderful officer?

**Kathryn:** Sure! He would have said "March!" and they would have marched.<sup>16</sup>

Kathryn went on to explain that she lived with her mother in Oak Park until her mother's death in 1959 and that following her mother's death she soon left Oak Park to start a new life in Asheville because she "wanted to live some of her life as someone other than Mr. McDaniel's daughter." Following these explanations she related this curious account of settling her father's estate:

**Kathryn:** Oh, by the way, you don't know but my name is Kathryn Ross McDaniel. And that happened because when father's estate was being settled, distributed, I decided it would be nice to call me Marion Ross McDaniel because Marion is a girl's name too. But the state wouldn't do it. They said they couldn't transfer from one name as male to the same name as female. So I couldn't change it then but several years later I decided to add the Ross. [Looking at her father's picture] Wasn't he a handsome guy?<sup>17</sup>

Handsome guy he was indeed, and admired too by the

community and by his daughter. Dr. Coe, who spoke the memorial tribute at the high school convocation knew that all those present wanted somehow to immortalize the deceased leader and he chose to close his remarks with Walt Whitman's affirmation of perpetual life:

I know I am deathless;  
I know I am august:  
My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite;  
I laugh at what you call dissolution;  
And I know the amplitude of time.<sup>18</sup>

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER VII

<sup>1</sup>Kathryn McDaniel, interview by author, 2 August 1989, Asheville, North Carolina (tape recording of interview held by author).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Hold Memorial Service for Mr. McDaniel," *The Trapeze*, 3 November 1939.

<sup>4</sup>"M.R. McDaniel, Superintendent of High School 25 Years, Is Dead," *Oak Leaves*, 2 November 1939, 16.

<sup>5</sup>"Thousands Pay Last Respects to M.R. McDaniel, School Chief," *Oak Leaves*, 9 November 1939, 33.

<sup>6</sup>"M.R. McDaniel, Superintendent of High School 25 Years, Is Dead," *Oak Leaves*, 2 November 1939, 16.

<sup>7</sup>"Marion R. McDaniel, H.S. Superintendent, Dies Suddenly," *The Oak Parker*, 2 November 1939.

<sup>8</sup>"Mr. McDaniel Dies Suddenly Tuesday Morning," *The Trapeze*, 3 November 1939, 1.

<sup>9</sup>Lewy Warren, "In Memoriam," *The Rotary Razz*, 6 November 1939 (In Oak Park and River Forest High School Archives).

<sup>10</sup>W.J. Hamilton, "Words Spoken in Memory of Ross McDaniel," November 1, 1939, (in Oak Park and River Forest High School Archives).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>"Tributes to M.R. McDaniel, 1875-1939," *The Oak Leaves*, 2 November 1939.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>"High School Trustees Honor Memory of M.R. McDaniel," *The Oak Leaves*, 2 November 1939.

<sup>16</sup>Kathryn Ross McDaniel, interview by author, 2 August 1989, Asheville, North Carolina (tape recording held

by author).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>"Dr. Coe Pays Strong Tribute to Mr. McDaniel at Student Memorial," *The Trapeze*, 10 November 39, 3.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE QUALITIES OF A LEADER

*An analysis of the leadership style of Marion Ross McDaniel  
in the context of academic theories of leadership*

What does it mean to be a leader? How does one become a leader? Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus believe that modern thought is getting a bit closer to answering these questions, largely through empirical investigations in this century.

Decades of academic analysis have given us more than 350 definitions of leadership. Literally thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders, and perhaps more important, what distinguished effective leaders from ineffective leaders....<sup>1</sup>

The leadership investigations of the last seventy-five years have encouraged a very important distinction between leadership and management. This distinction probably surfaced in the context of disappointment with the strictly scientific management theories as advanced by Max Weber, Frederick Taylor, and Henri Fayol. Good scientific managers were not necessarily good leaders. Those who could engineer their organizations so that everybody was responsible to somebody and that everybody had a clear responsibility within the organization did not necessarily end up with

highly productive organizations. And that's where leadership comes in, some ability beyond management, that stimulates followers. "Managers," Bennis and Nanus say, "are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing."<sup>2</sup> In this understanding of leaders, they stand as visionaries; they see as their primary responsibility to provide direction for the organization and to articulate its mission. Leaders generate positive feelings in their followers. Followers feel good about working with their leaders. An efficient, if oversimplified, way to summarize the history of management and leadership theories in this century is to label the period from 1900-1930 as the time when scientific management was in the forefront, from 1930-1960 as the period of human relations management, and from 1960 to the present as the human resources management period. During the last ninety years, the development of management and leadership theories has placed increased importance on the people in an organization and decreased importance on structure and management systems. "The new leader," Bennis and Nanus explain, "is one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders."<sup>3</sup> These new leaders influence their followers through these strategies outlined by Bennis and Nanus and summarized below:

1. They gain the attention of their followers through their vision. They are concerned with outcomes of efforts,

not the efforts themselves. They articulate the outcomes in such a way that their followers see a nobility of purpose in achieving them and personal fulfillment in giving of themselves to accomplish them. Bennis and Nanus quote Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* to emphasize this feeling of fulfillment: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one."

2. They are great communicators of their visions, of their dreams. The challenge for leaders is to be able to instill a shared set of meanings, values, dreams, and mission in all members of an organization. They use the concrete language of metaphor, symbol and body positioning to communicate with their followers.

3. They establish the trust of their followers through positioning their enterprise in the most advantageous spot in the world marketplace and then "stay the course" with the most expeditious plan to take advantage of that spot.

4. They regard themselves positively without being cocky. They recognize their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses.<sup>4</sup>

Such a listing of the characteristics of the new leader strikes one as being disarmingly simple, especially when considered in the context of the classical philosophical arguments concerning the nature of leaders, whether they are born or made, whether alpha individuals are

simply tossed out by nature in stingy proportions to walk among other individuals who give them a kind of mystical obeisance. But leadership has no mystery about it and it is surprisingly simple in the final analysis. W. Edwards Deming, reflecting a similar simplified view of leadership, says in point one of his fourteen points, that leaders "Create constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service, with the aim to become competitive, stay in business, and provide jobs."<sup>5</sup> Leadership, after all, is a human business, and is best accomplished by persons who recognize that those who work with them are human beings. Maslow and Herzberg correctly observe that the basic needs of recognition and self-fulfillment must be experienced in the work place if workers are to be truly productive.

It is, of course, not fair to apply retrospectively these modern theories of leadership to the subject of this biographical study, Marion Ross McDaniel, and judge him by the extent to which he fulfilled them. After all, he received his university training and did most of his leadership and management work during the time when the "hot" administrative theory was scientific management. It is true that the human relations theory came to the attention of administrators in the early 1930's, largely on the force of the "Hawthorne Experiments" of Mayo and Roethlisberger, but there remained a strong belief in the engineered work organization idealized by scientific management. Was

scientific management evident in the administration of McDaniel? If one looks at the way the school was organized beginning with McDaniel's abolishing the assistant principalship as his first act on the night he was appointed principal, it becomes apparent that he didn't see much purpose in a hierarchical arrangement so important in scientific management organizations. As a matter of fact, throughout all of his twenty-five years at the head of Oak Park and River Forest High School, he was the sole administrator of the school, serving as both district superintendent and building principal. The organizational chart of the faculty was flat: all persons reported directly to McDaniel. His span of control was exceedingly broad, especially in the later years of his leadership when the faculty grew to more than one hundred and fifty persons. There were department heads, to be sure, but their responsibilities were for curriculum and supplies, not people, as they would have been in a hierarchical structure.

In all of the research for this study of the life of McDaniel, this writer did not find a single reference associating him with any particular administrative, management, or leadership model or theory. It is only in his behavior that it is possible to observe certain principles of administration in operation, and therefore when a particular principle is observed, it must be interpreted as an unconscious parallel to the theory embracing that

principle rather than a conscious following of it.

With this distinction between administrative behavior that is an unconscious parallel of a theory and that which is a conscious following of it firmly in mind, it is safe to engage in an anachronistic analysis of McDaniel's administrative behavior that involves inclusion of references to the theories of Bennis, Nanus, Deming, McGregor, Herzberg, Maslow, and other human resources theoreticians who lived and wrote after McDaniel's leadership style had been developed.

Kathryn McDaniel made an exceedingly telling comment when she answered the question, "Why was he such a successful leader of a school?" with "Because he was such a successful human."<sup>6</sup> He knew himself, knew his strengths and weaknesses. In the words of Bennis and Nanus, he managed himself so that he could lead others. Rigorously disciplined himself, he expected discipline in others. Confident of his own abilities, he could have confidence in the abilities of others. It is not surprising, therefore, that he so often said that he hired great teachers and then got out of their way to let them work. There is no evidence in the record that he visited classes to evaluate teachers or that any kind of evaluation system was in place. He looked always to the results his teachers were getting with their students, to the champions they were producing on the University of Chicago examinations and to the preparation they were giving

their students that postured them for earning higher grade point averages at the University of Illinois than they did at Oak Park and River Forest High School. He had a deep set of Christian values that he assumed all those who worked with him shared. Given the time and the community, that was a safe assumption, for the community was monolithic in its system of values and McDaniel was the quintessential embodiment of those values. He was a "Theory Y" manager before there was such a theory; he believed in the essential goodness of his faculty and his students, believed that they all wanted to work and to achieve, and given the opportunity and proper environment they would.

He articulated his vision for Oak Park and River Forest High School as that institution which took its motto "Those Things That Are Best" seriously. He believed that institutions as well as persons tend to turn into what they image themselves to be, and he constantly held before the faculty, the students, and the community his vision of the high school as one of the best in the nation. He first called it so and continued throughout his years as leader of Oak Park and River Forest High School to give substance to his school's claim to greatness. All of his speeches to faculty and students emphasized the importance of a positive self image and the powerful effect of a such an image in producing greatness. He said it to athletic teams; he said it to class assemblies; he said it to parents; he said it in

speeches to the community. One can't avoid thinking here of the Bennis and Nanus "Strategy I: Attention Through Vision." The record is clear: by the time of McDaniel's death, Oak Park and River Forest High School was considered one of the best high schools in the nation. The vision had become a reality.

In the Chapter IV of this study, "The Power of the Word," McDaniel's speeches and writings were observed to be done in image rich language, cast in rhetorically intricate sentences designed to produce a powerful emotional impact. Again, one can't avoid the anachronistic look to "Strategy II: Meaning Through Communication" of Bennis and Nanus. To capture imaginations and to communicate visions is tough work and demands the highest skills in communication. The leader's job is to get the members of an organization to embrace an organizational goal as if it were their own, to get each and every person in an organization to identify the organizational mission as their personal mission. That comes with persuasion, not by mandate. McDaniel created a culture under the roof of Oak Park and River Forest High School that was remarkably unified in its mission.

Probably no single characteristic of McDaniel stood out more than his selflessness, than his desire to serve others. This characteristic seemed to emanate from the deepest recesses of his soul, from the very essence of his identity. Like the other parallels to modern leadership



theory observed in this analysis, there appeared to be no conscious attempt to program this emphasis on service into his administrative style. This commitment to service was the focus of The National Honor Society's memorial statement:

In 1933 Mr. McDaniel became president of the National Council of the National Honor Society, an organization of youth in our schools who, like their leader, have the gifts of great potentialities for leadership and for service to mankind. His administration was not of organization merely, but of a way of life; his leadership was as self-effacing and courageous as it was widely known. Like so many men of superior merit and recognized achievement, he modestly let the deeds proclaim the doer of them.<sup>7</sup>

Self-sacrifice was emphasized as a significant leadership trait by Dr. Ward in his sermon at McDaniel's funeral:

Yet the position of eminence achieved was reared not out of political favoritism or partisanship, but on the solid foundation of character and education. Early in life, he gained a clear concept of the greatness of his task. He knew if he would teach others, he must first know. If he would fit others for life's arduous struggle, he must first fit himself. If he would build a life work which would endure, he must go down to bedrock.<sup>8</sup>

His daughter Kathryn's observations recorded in this study emphasized that her father was never proud, "puffed up" as she phrased it, except about the achievement of his students, not about anything he did. Dr. Coe, in his memorial address at the high school service, gave this analysis of McDaniel's leadership qualities: "He possessed to a remarkable degree the nobilities of life--honesty, kindness, courtesy, modesty, loyalty, and sensitiveness. He could be firm without being angry. He could be happy without being effusive. He had a smile, an unusually beautiful and

winning smile, that caught us up in its loveliness. He was a noble gentleman."<sup>9</sup>

There were, of course, the legends that developed about McDaniel, the "Silver Fox," that seem to portray him as a pompous, feared, and dictatorial person. It was rumored in the community that he would go around straightening teachers' ties, pulling them tighter at the collar. It was rumored that he would poke his head into a collection of students in the hall and stare at them, saying nothing, but suggesting by his stare that they better move on. And there was the rumor that he told one young male teacher who over a period of several months alternately grew and shaved off a moustache either to leave it or shave it. And he did have a strong belief in his sense of direction as his daughter Kathryn recalled in their walks when her father would say, "I want to go this way and that's the way we're going."

And there was the pain he felt in stepping out of his formal role as administrator to be at ease. There appear to be no pictures of him not wearing a suit and tie. Even with his daughter Kathryn in school he could not break formality as evidenced in this story told by Kathryn in an interview:

**Interviewer:** Did you see your father much during the course of a day at school?

**Kathryn:** I'd bump into him once in awhile.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever go to his office just to talk to him--to ask him for some money or something?

**Kathryn:** No. Gosh no!

**Interviewer:** But you did bump into him in the halls once in awhile?

**Kathryn:** Or he into me. As a matter of fact we came around the corner and trying to avoid it [hitting him] and I slipped (my heel caught into a crack or something); he said, "Sorry."

**Interviewer:** When you saw your father in the hall, did you talk?

**Kathryn:** If he saw me. If he was in the hall, he was going someplace. I would never say "Hi Pa." Wouldn't think of it.<sup>10</sup>

But the legends and negatives aside, this portrait of McDaniel shows an extraordinarily effective leader who while positioned in the early years of the Twentieth Century is nevertheless exhibiting the essential qualities of effective leadership formalized in leadership theory of the latter part of the Twentieth Century. Even though his leadership

was highly centralized, he placed a high value on the quality of the people working in the school system. It should not be surprising that a leader who placed people above systems was successful. That valuing of people was the key to his extraordinary success as a school administrator.

Would McDaniel have been a successful school administrator today? Not without major changes in his style. People today simply would not respond well to his austere demeanor, his reserve, his selflessness, and his formal behavior. It would be a rare community in today's world that would tolerate such disciplined reserve and it would be equally rare to find a community with such a monolithic set of values as the Oak Park and River Forest community of 1912 through 1939. While McDaniel gave his faculty their heads in teaching students, he did not empower them to participate in creating a vision for his school. He created that vision and he sold it to the faculty.

His leadership style worked only because he understood what his community valued, what his faculty expected, and what his students respected. He was shaped to lead by a society that was solidly unified in its vision of what a school leader should be, and he was the quintessential embodiment of that vision.

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER VIII

<sup>1</sup>Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 4.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 3

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 26-68, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup>William W. Scherkenbach, *The Deming Route to Quality and Productivity*, (Washington: CEEP Press, 1988), 9.

<sup>6</sup>Kathryn Ross McDaniel, interview by author, 2 August 1989, Asheville, North Carolina (tape recording held by author).

<sup>7</sup>Harry V. Church, "Marion Ross McDaniel," on National Honor Society of Secondary Schools Letterhead, 1 November 1939 (in Oak Park and River Forest High School Archives).

<sup>8</sup>"Thousands Pay Last Respects to M.R. McDaniel, School Chief," *The Oak Leaves*, 9 November 1939, 32.

<sup>9</sup>"Dr. Coe Pays Strong Tribute to Mr. McDaniel, School Chief," *The Oak Leaves*, 9 November 1939.

<sup>10</sup>Kathryn Ross McDaniel, interview by author, 2 August 1989, Asheville, North Carolina (tape recording held by author).

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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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