


Around the year A.D. 168, Marcus Aurelius, the last of what history calls the five good emperors of Rome, while on campaign near the Danube, penned a book of meditations on the virtues of Stoicism that lead to a happy life. For eleven of the book's twelve chapters, he lays out principles of self mastery, moral strength, and other tenets of the Stoics, but his opening chapter is entirely given to thanksgiving through remembrance as he recounts the family members, teachers, and friends who have made him what he became. Marcus Aurelius embodied Plato's ideal of the philosopher-king, and by giving pride of place to a chapter on gratitude, he lends weight to the idea that this should be important for us all.

It is fitting, then, on this evening, that we follow in the emperor's footsteps, recalling those who have helped make us who and what we are. Athena, the Greeks claimed, leapt fully formed and armed from the head of Zeus, but each of us is the product of a great many others whose words and deeds have shaped our lives. Over the next few moments, or perhaps on the drive home, think back about those people in your life. Whose are the faces that first come to mind? Some you may not have thought about in years. Others may be a part of your daily life. Chances are, you will be like Marcus Aurelius, calling to mind a wide assortment of people that include family and friends, teachers and coaches, co-workers and bosses. Each has contributed something unique to your life, something without which you would not be the person you are.

I am fortunate that many of those who have been the primary artists of my life are here this evening. In fact most of the guests that are here tonight were invited because you have been instrumental in the lives of teachers who have gone on to influence countless others.

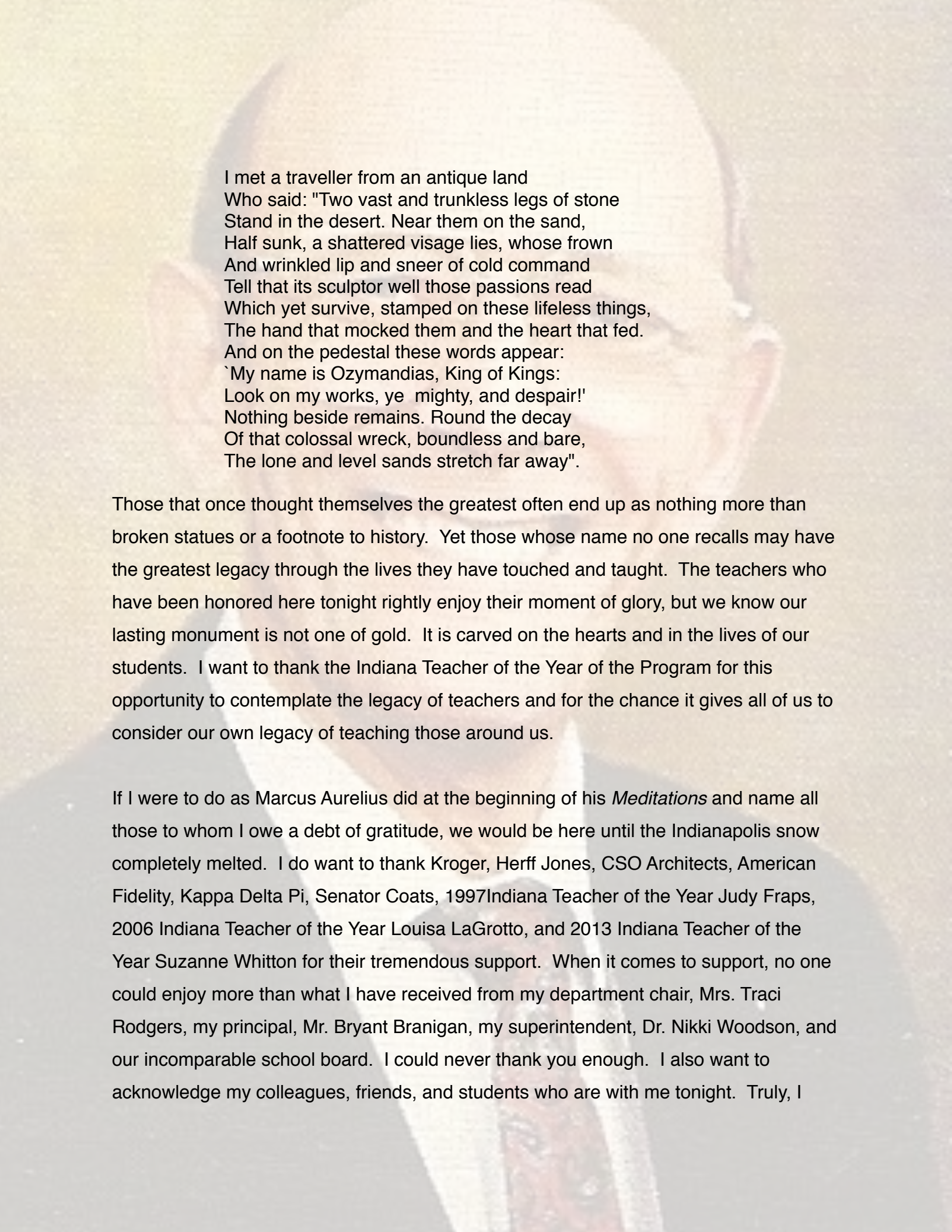
And so we come to the purpose for this evening's celebration. We are here to acknowledge and honor teachers, not just one or a handful, but all teachers. When I was named our district's teacher of the year, I was the most surprised of all, as the YouTube video clearly shows. I was humbled to have received such an honor because I could think of many great teachers in our school and throughout our district. I was not



chosen because I was the best. I was chosen to represent the best, as indeed were all the teachers of the year here tonight. These teachers come from districts across our state filled with hard-working, dedicated, educational leaders. They are scholars and artists and scientists who have chosen to use their gifts to guide our children in their first steps on the shared journey of discovery that is education. The teachers of the year and those they represent are the 21st century philosopher kings, whose empires are not bounded by geography, but are as limitless as the minds of their students.

The teacher of the year program provides an important service to our state and our communities. By shining a light on individual teachers, it allows us to reflect on all teachers and the enormous influence they have on the lives around them. We remember, as Marcus Aurelius did, those who have shaped our own lives, and perhaps we come to realize something even more weighty, the fact that we all are teachers of someone. Those who bear the title of teacher have the opportunity to affect the lives of twenty, thirty, or even hundreds of young people five days a week during the most formative years of their lives. It is a calling of inestimable consequence. Yet each of us, in his or her own way, passes on knowledge and leads others, the twin functions of the teacher. Whether in government or business, on the sports field or in our families, school is always in session for those who observe our lives. As we leave tonight, recalling the great teachers we have known, think also of those who are your students. Who is learning from you, and what are you teaching them?

The great Roman orator, philosopher, and statesman Cicero told a story about his early political career. Serving office on the island of Sicily, he was quite proud of his accomplishments and certain that they had produced admiration in Rome. On his way back to the city, he was crushed when someone asked him where he had been, utterly unaware of his whereabouts or his work. The essence of the story, of course, is that what we think are the greatest accomplishments may actually count for very little. It is the theme of Shelley's famous poem "Ozymandias."



I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away".

Those that once thought themselves the greatest often end up as nothing more than broken statues or a footnote to history. Yet those whose name no one recalls may have the greatest legacy through the lives they have touched and taught. The teachers who have been honored here tonight rightly enjoy their moment of glory, but we know our lasting monument is not one of gold. It is carved on the hearts and in the lives of our students. I want to thank the Indiana Teacher of the Year of the Program for this opportunity to contemplate the legacy of teachers and for the chance it gives all of us to consider our own legacy of teaching those around us.

If I were to do as Marcus Aurelius did at the beginning of his *Meditations* and name all those to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, we would be here until the Indianapolis snow completely melted. I do want to thank Kroger, Herff Jones, CSO Architects, American Fidelity, Kappa Delta Pi, Senator Coats, 1997 Indiana Teacher of the Year Judy Fraps, 2006 Indiana Teacher of the Year Louisa LaGrotto, and 2013 Indiana Teacher of the Year Suzanne Whitton for their tremendous support. When it comes to support, no one could enjoy more than what I have received from my department chair, Mrs. Traci Rodgers, my principal, Mr. Bryant Branigan, my superintendent, Dr. Nikki Woodson, and our incomparable school board. I could never thank you enough. I also want to acknowledge my colleagues, friends, and students who are with me tonight. Truly, I

could outdo the Stoic Roman emperor were I to list all the ways you have blessed my life. In particular I want to thank my own high school Latin teacher, Marcene Farley, for being here from Illinois, and Dr. Tim Long, my undergraduate Greek professor for coming from Indiana University. For years Prof. Long entertained our AP Latin students at lunch and invited them to sit in on one of his classes when we visited IU for an annual research project. When he retired, we set up a scholarship at North Central High School in his name. I also want to acknowledge my mother-in-law, Linda Stillions and my mother, Patricia Perkins, who taught fourth grade in New Albany, Indiana, before marrying my dad, Norman Perkins, a long-time teacher and elementary school principal. With them are my children, Austin and Olivia, and my wife, Melissa, about whom I will use a line from *Hamlet* as I did many years ago. "She's so conjunctive to my life and soul that, as the star moves not but in his sphere, I could not but by her."

We do have one guest here this evening that I would like to join me, Dr. Bernard Barcio. For decades, Bernie was the face of Latin education. From the 1970s to the early 2000s, his *Pompeiana* newsletter provided a place for students across the country to publish their stories and articles. I first saw Bernie when I was in high school and he presented one of his many Roman characters at the Indiana Junior Classical League State Convention. You see, Bernie was into historical reenactment, and his presentations brought the ancient world to life for countless students. When Melissa and I decided to move back to Indiana from Texas, he was the first person I called to see if there were any Latin positions in Indianapolis, and he made the connection for me with North Central. I was honored to have him perform his persona of tribune Marcus Loreius Tiburtinus numerous times for my students at NC, and when I took up the cause of Roman reenactment thanks to a Lilly fellowship in 2011, Bernie was again my first call for advice. Please join me in welcoming fellow Latin teacher and the 1986 Indiana Teacher of the Year Dr. Bernard Barcio.