

Dr. Robert E. Tranquada, M.D. '51
Pomona College Commencement 2007
May 13, 2007

Let me begin by thanking Pomona College and the Board of Trustees for this wonderful honor. It is deeply appreciated, coming from this institution that I so deeply respect.

There are some curious facts surrounding this honor. Exactly 60 years after the founding of Pomona College, I arrived as a student. And then, exactly 60 years later, I got my degree. That must be some kind of record. Do you suppose that it is a pure coincidence that 60 is 1.2765957 times 47?

The Gospel of Mark attributes to Jesus a comment that "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, among his own family and his own house." Having been honored here among my own family, my assumption is that I am no prophet. I should have foreseen that. But then, I have known perfectly well that we are, of course, a not-for-prophet institution.

Whatever I have achieved is clearly the product of all that has been given to me by my family, my school and my friends and colleagues. I was extremely fortunate to have two wonderful parents, both graduates of Pomona College. The most important lesson they taught me was that whatever I was doing – playing in a football game, taking an algebra test, going to an important interview – that I should always remember which family I come from. But they didn't stop there, they provided role models I could not ignore. I was incredibly fortunate to have that guidance and that model – for I have always strived to remember which family I come from and to try to live up to that goals.

I have been equally as fortunate in the support and companionship, on which I have thrived, provided by my wife Janet of nearly 56 years. I owe Pomona another undying debt of gratitude for having admitted her to the class of '51.

So, as you can see, I have been couched in the arms of Pomona College one way or another for a long time. It would be impossible to return more than a fraction of that I have received from her, but that effort has been a continuing joy. Once again, my heartfelt thanks for this wonderful honor. I will wear it with nothing but gratitude.

About Dr. Robert E. Tranquada, M.D. '51

Tranquada is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He also serves on the board of directors of the Huntington Medical Research Institutes and Mount San Antonio Gardens. He served as chairman of the Board of Overseers of the Claremont University Consortium (The Claremont Colleges) from 2000-06. He is chairman emeritus of the Board of Trustees of Pomona College and emeritus trustee of the Keck Graduate Institute of Applied Life Sciences. Tranquada graduated from Pomona College summa cum laude and received his M.D. degree from Stanford University School of Medicine in 1955. He went on to establish and direct the Watts Health Center from 1965-69 (now the Watts Health Foundation). He was a member of the Christopher Commission (The Independent Commission on the Los Angeles



Police Department) in 1991, and chaired the Los Angeles County Task Force on Health Care Access from 1992-1993. Tranquada is the author of more than 60 published scientific and educational papers and book chapters. He received an honorary Sc.D. from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in 1988.