

# NAIOP Edward H. Linde Public Service Award

November 7, 2013

*Honoring civic and charitable contributions, along with a life-long commitment to the highest values of service to the greater community.*

## Introduction by Jack Connors



Thank you for allowing me the honor of joining you this evening to introduce my good friends Bill and Joyce Cummings. Although I had certainly been aware of the Cummings' business and philanthropic involvements for many years, my special affinity for the City, and theirs for the suburbs, somewhat precluded our actually meeting until just about two years ago.

It was right around the time Bill and Joyce first traveled to Rwanda and became interested in Partners In Health, a Boston-based nonprofit, working there to bring healthcare to some of the world's most vulnerable people.

I knew of Bill's reputation for moving quickly when a promising opportunity presented itself. After all, his 1996 purchase and rapid redevelopment of the once dilapidated United Shoe site into the thriving Cummings Center business park in Beverly is widely admired.

As a board member of Partners In Health, I was delighted to learn rather quickly that this custom of jumping into a good project with both feet extended to the Cummings' philanthropy. Just 18 months after their visit to Rwanda, they returned for their second visit, this time for the dedication of the country's first and only outpatient cancer center, the construction of which was fully funded by Cummings Foundation.

Considering the audience, I am sure that everyone in this room can appreciate a well-constructed building. In the case of the cancer center, however, it is what now happens *inside* the building that is truly remarkable. Joyce and Bill saw an urgent need, and they acted quickly, helping to make cancer treatment much more accessible and, ultimately, helping to save many lives.

While I have been more connected with their work in Rwanda through my own long-time involvement with Paul Farmer, the Cummings are having an even greater impact right here in the

Boston area. They feel strongly about investing in the areas where both the staff and clients of Cummings Properties live.

Founded in 1970 in Woburn, with just five buildings, Cummings Properties has grown into one of the most stable commercial real estate firms in the country. Today, its 10 million square feet of space in 10 suburban Boston communities provide business homes for more than 2,000 commercial leasing clients.

In addition, the firm provides secure jobs to more than 350 staff members, whose tenure with the company averages an impressive 10-plus years. And that dedication goes both ways, evidenced by the fact that, in its nearly 45-year history, Cummings Properties has never had a staff layoff.

I can imagine that these Cummings staff members are extremely proud to be part of an organization that, for many years, has awarded college scholarships to deserving students through the McKeown Scholars program, and affordable housing and care for senior citizens through two New Horizons not-for-profit retirement communities. Cummings Foundation's largest commitment to date was a \$50 million gift to what is now known as the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.

More recently, Bill and Joyce created a local grants program, which, during the past two years alone, has awarded more than \$20 million to local nonprofits...to support schools and build playgrounds...to provide the basic necessities for those in need...to combat intolerance...and this program is just getting started. Next year, Cummings Foundation will award an additional \$20 million in grants solely for the benefit of greater Boston communities.

The Cummings' vision in both business and philanthropy, combined with their special form of generosity, have left an indelible mark, both close to home and halfway around the world. I am so pleased to introduce Bill and Joyce, who truly have shown a life-long commitment to the highest values of service in our greater Boston community.

### **Joyce Cummings' Remarks**

First, a very special thank you to you, Jack, one of the busiest and most **involved** people in Boston. We appreciate your very kind words.

Bill and I thank **NAIOP** very much for this **extremely** generous recognition. We are truly **humbled** and proud to be associated through this special award with the wonderful **legacy** of the Linde family in real estate **and** philanthropy.

### **Bill Cummings' Remarks**

Many decades ago, I always **loved** to play with Tonka toys, and with my large **Erector** Set, and I actually **wore out** my first **Monopoly** game.

Then I grew up, and found myself in the **business** of commercial real estate. Just like in **Monopoly**, we started buying properties.

We dug with **real** excavators and bulldozers, and built with **real** structural steel. And wasn't that fun!

And much to the consternation of my then-very young bride, the earliest buildings monopolized on our dining room table for weeks on end.

With a really terrific all-in-house team, Cummings Properties gradually purchased and/or built a good 10 million square feet. The classic big fish in a little pond.

Recently, **when I wasn't looking**, my dear colleague, Dennis Clarke, purchased the perfect 50-acre Beverly property for us. Many of you will know the 50-acre property directly abutting **North Shore Music Theatre**.

What was the site? Very ironically, it was the former world headquarters of Parker Brothers – the makers of **MONOPOLY!**

Developing this site will be **great** fun, as was our recent TradeCenter 128 project in Woburn, including the new **Middlesex Superior Court**.

The single project about which our whole team feels best about, however, was our rebuilding of the enormous old USM property in Beverly. We were able to bring almost **6,000** really good jobs back into what is now **Cummings Center**.

Notwithstanding the nature of our business, Joyce and I have recognized for a long time that no one can truly **own** anything.

We can often **control** things during our lifetimes, but how can we ever think we really **own** anything, **especially** land?

Real estate has been very very good to us, and after accumulating far more than we ever imagined, we did decide to give it all away, hopefully, while we are still capable of doing it ourselves.

And I can assure most of you, as **you** grow older, it will become easier and easier to reach that decision.

## **Joyce Cummings' Remarks**

David Brittan, of Tufts, recently wrote a column about pessimism versus optimism. He stated that, instead of being an optimist or a pessimist, one could be a **meliorist**.

A meliorist is someone who believes that the world can and should be better, and that **people** have the capacity to improve it.

Bill and I are fortunate to have the capacity to help provide financial support toward improving parts of the world.

We always want to recognize, however, those who are doing the “big work” of actually **implementing** programs that bring about positive change: Our teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses, dedicated nonprofit employees, and countless others.

I recently came across the same **Winston Churchill** quote three times, so I figured it was a good message to use tonight. Churchill said, “We make a living by what we get. **We make a life by what we give.**”

So, let’s **all** work a little more toward making a life by what we give. And when someone asks us what we do, let’s think of ourselves as meliorists trying to help make the world a better place.

Thank you!