Episode 4 President Don Lubbers and Bill Seidman - A Legacy of Mentorship

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Episode 4

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Gerry Cooke (00:11):

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Welcome to the Seidman mentorship podcast. This is your captain speaking. On this show we navigate the voyage of life through the lens of Lakers, some who have just come aboard and others who are well underway. We will speak with experts who will show us the ropes, help us plot a course and recount exhilarating tales of uncharted territory all while promoting lifelong learning agility and a culture of mentorship.

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Gerry Cooke (00:37):

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Today on the show, I welcome Grand Valley President Emeritus Don Lubbers. Lubbers served as University President from 1969 to 2001 making him the longest-serving university leader in the country. Lubbers is credited with the growth of Grand Valley and its reorganization from a collection of colleges to a full-fledged university. Lubber's style as president was a combination of community and state government hobnobbing, and a congenial form of an open door, enlightened paternalism on campus. We discussed the legacy of Bill Seidman, who was immortalized by the GV business school building that bears his name. Bill was a successful businessman, an advisor to four presidents, and credited with the major role in the founding of Grand Valley State University. President Lubber shares what the university was like in the beginning, his hope for students now, and the role mentorship plays in the fabric of Laker life. It is my honor and pleasure today to sit with the President Emeritus Don Lubbers who, President Lubbers, I think of you as my president still. I mean, it's been many years since I've been at Grand Valley, but I still think of it that way and welcome, ahoy, welcome to the show, and thanks for coming.

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Don Lubbers (01:49):

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Thank you, Gerry. Yeah. I sort of feel a proprietary right to you.

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Gerry Cooke (01:55):

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Well, the feeling is mutual. Although I will admit that as a student, I did my best to stay out of your purview as much as possible. I thought of you more as a principal than I thought of you as a paternal figure.

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Don Lubbers (02:06):

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Yeah, I know. Maybe, maybe that was your mistake.

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Gerry Cooke (02:10):

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I think it was my mistake. And I think it's gonna go right into the mentorship piece. We're going to talk about, because I feel like you, um, Bill Seidman, Mr. Niemeyer, there's so many names of people that did not mentor me directly, but you created systems and you created opportunities that students at Grand Valley are benefiting from today.

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Don Lubbers (02:34):

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Well, mentoring has several levels. One of them is a direct professional mentoring program where students and faculty or some business person or someone in a profession is assigned and they, one mentors the other. That becomes a part of formal education, which I think is going to increase in importance. Not that it hasn't been important so far, but it is going to be the way of education in the future. More than it has been in the past. If you look at the engineering school and the business school to some degree they have formal mentoring programs. Students must be mentored and that kind of an assignment is a good one because it's hard to escape from it. The second, and another important way of mentoring, is for the student, the young person to just observe a professor or an administrator or someone that he or she admires, and that they look at that person, they talk with that person and as they observe, they are mentored, that's a kind of informal mentoring, which is also exceedingly important, but it depends upon the student's curiosity.

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Don Lubbers (04:23):

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The student must be curious and want to learn from a more experienced person. So, they learn through observation and maybe some interviews and questions and living as close to that person as it's possible for them to, to in a in a non-formalized relationship. So those are, I see, those are two very important mentoring systems of mentoring, you know, in the, started in the middle ages, I think in Western civilization where people entered professions by being sent to a person in a profession, if you wanted to be an artisan, her blacksmith or whatever it was often your parents would make arrangements and you would be assigned, and that's the way you learn the profession. I think it's going to be more and more important for the student to be assigned to someone in a profession that she or he thinks might interest them as a profession and get into a formal mental right mentoring program. I was always for that when we started the engineering school that was built right into it. And it's been one of the most important aspects of the Grand Valley Engineering School.

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Gerry Cooke (06:19):

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I like how you take that apprenticeship to journeyman, to master from the, I knew you were going to get your history degree. I knew, I knew I was going to get some history lessons beyond that, of, of Grand Valley and the Seidman School that I'm going to ask you. But and I appreciate that. Not only as they call me the captain of the mentorship. So, I told Bob Stoll, he was the Admiral that makes you the Commodore, I believe in, in Naval rank, I'm going to check with T Haas on that one, but that, that makes you part of that and those systems. And I'm happy to hear you say that. I wasn't surprised to hear you say that. I'm curious though, about your mentors in the past and your mentees, the people you mentored men, you know, you were mentored by a mentor and how those relationships

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Don Lubbers (07:07):

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I was, I was never in a formal, I was in informally mentored. I'm an anomaly really because I grew up from the time I was three years old in the home of a college president, your, your father, my father was a president of central college in Iowa, where I became president later and of Hope College. And then I came back to Western Michigan. So, I'm clone-like, and that was where I was mentored. When I entered my profession, I had lived as a son of a president for so long that some, many of the things

that were necessary in order to be successful in the profession just came second nature to me. So, I, my greatest mentor were my mother and father, they taught me how you become a successful college president, not only from them, did I learn the nuts and bolts of the job, but they always loved the institutions.

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Don Lubbers (08:44):

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They served the, they loved the institution as much as the practice of the presidency. I learned that from them it was never in a profession. And how do you get ahead in the profession? It was always, this is a wonderful profession and you've got to love the place you're serving. And so that I'm, I'm not what one would call the, the normal mentee, but that was a, an informal mentoring process that was as intense as any mentoring process there is. And of course, I observed other college presidents, but I think very early on, as I went into history as a, I wanted to be a history professor and I was for two years, an instructor in history. But I think I always really hope that I would be a college president, but you don't train for that and then say, okay, now I'm going to put my application in. It doesn't work that way. But I was fortunate in how my whole career unfolded and that the people from the college where my father had been president and where I had grown up as a boy, invited me back, and I became president there at a young age, the mentoring was essential for my success. So many people, for instance, in, in business who are sons and daughters of business people, they will work in the business, inherit the business, some of them rebel and don't want anything to do with it.

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Don Lubbers (10:56):

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If you find you can adjust to what your parents have been an hour, and you like that it's really helpful because you don't have to go through certain phases of life. That other piece that people have like rebellion and working your way up. But each person has a good reason. I hope for doing what she or he wants to do, but my track, and I think there is this track and mentoring that you, you, you look at people that you admire and you think are doing something really great, and you think about them and you concentrate on them and try to become acquainted with them. You may be, you usually are because that is mentoring at the highest quality.

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Gerry Cooke (12:03):

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Did you mentor anyone?

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Don Lubbers (12:09):

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Again, I think when we're in an informal basis, I like to think about, and sometimes I'm in contact with people who've worked in one of the colleges and universities where I have been, who've become presidents and they've been successful at once. So yes, I, I mentored them. And in, at times they would ask me about the job and they would observe me again, the observation of how it worked and the, how I worked. And yeah, so they, they learned how to be presidents and they were, there are about five or six of them. And they all were successful.

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Gerry Cooke (13:05):

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I wonder what your thoughts are about what happened between the time where you grew up and chose your mentors informally. And I had a similar background there wasn't an official or a, there wasn't a program for it when I came up through Grand Valley, but I gravitated towards people. Professors, professionals that as you pointed out, I admired there was a spark relationship and then pursued them with questions, pretty relentlessly. And some of them to that day, we mentioned Bob Stoll, who we're both acquainted with. And I still in contact with Bob, especially now back at Grand Valley in a professional position. I go, Bob, how do I do this? Or who do I talk to about that? What happened between our original time? And now we're, we're developing formal mentorship programs?

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Don Lubbers (14:01):

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Well, I haven't been around to watch it. I just have seen in the, in the Seidman college and then the College of Engineering, particularly, I have seen the mentorship, the formal mentorship programs grow and succeed where you have a formal and good mentorship program after college, there is almost 100% employment in the field that w-where the person has been mentored. It's a- It's amazing. It is, it's the way to go for employment. And that's why I think mentorship is beginning to spread. It's beginning, it's spreading in Grand Valley, like it is in other institutions I would assume, because it works.

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Gerry Cooke (15:00):

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What about from the employer and the company side, when they listen to this podcast? And I asked them, often I say, Hey, you know, join the mentorship program. There's a lot of benefits. It's often hard to describe those tangible benefits. What do you think the mentor who's the business professional or the company owner? Why should they get involved in our mentorship programs?

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Don Lubbers (15:25):

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Well, one of the nicer aspects of it is they become friendlier with a younger person. They have a, they have a new kind of relationship. They may have children. They've had a good relationship with sons and daughters, but, but this is a new kind of relationship. They're providing a program that assists this younger person. And they get to know this younger person by knowing a younger person, you know what talents that person has. And more often than not, they find out how that mentee can fit into their organization. And so, it's quite natural for them to hire the person when that person is finished with college. So, it's, it works, it works on a personal level. And whenever we can have personal relationships that please us, enrich us, that's a plus in life. That's what life should be mostly about. And then when you can spot talent and develop it the way you want to develop it, that's another plus. So that's what I see as the advantage of mentorship.

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Gerry Cooke (16:56):

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I hope everybody's listening very closely to those last few sentences that you said, because I want him to join our program. So, we won't stop for a telethon break to say call in now. We're, it's great to hear you say that. And it reinforces the things that I am trying to launch inside the program and the Seidman school is backing in secretly between you and I the university, I would like to see that as a culture thread within the university, which I think, and now I'm going to ask you about that. Next is your leadership, Bill's leadership that gave us these tools that gave us these structures. So, we dove right into it because it was so natural, but let me back up. And it's the loaded question right now. I'm going to ask you to, to summarize for us at your voyage at Grand Valley, which I know is a monumental task, because you, you serve so many years and so many accolades, but when you think about it, when you crystallize it, distill it,

how do you remember your time at Grand Valley? And how would you, how would you tell the folks that don't know, don't know Don Lubbers.

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Don Lubbers (18:13):

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Here, here, here are the major objectives. First to have high academic quality throughout the curriculum work to make it good throughout, I was advised by some people pick two or three programs and make them good. My response was no, we have to try to make all of them good. Their suggestion was put resources into just a few, because that will help them be better, but I felt no let's spread the resources across the whole spectrum of the institution and make it all good. So that was objective number one, objective number two, which you said, if you've read or listened to some of my speeches, I almost included in everyone.

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Don Lubbers (19:17):

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It's important to be professionally excellent, but in a community of excellent educators, we have to live in the civil society. I remember when I arrived, I would get copies of memos. They weren't emails. Then they were memos from one faculty member to another, or from one person to the community that would just be ranting and raving about something. And I came on pretty strong. I said, we don't do that. That's okay to have your opinion. It's all right to disagree. But hurling epithets is not the way we should be doing this. And so, I stressed the civil society was just as important as the academic society. So those were my two main objectives. Third I considered myself an enabler. It was my job to see that everybody else who wanted to be successful in the organization could be successful. And of course, if the more that we're successful, the better I'd look.

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Don Lubbers (20:42):

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I mean, it's just, that's just kind of an easy human accent, if you help others and they help you. You're all going to be more successful and look better. So, I always thought of myself as a, as an enabler. Those were, those were exceedingly important aspects of, of how I, how I administered I guess that's, that's summarizes the, the essence or the ethos that I tried to offer the university. And of course, the president is important. You, you can't, you can't say you're not important. You're not going to be the kind of a boss. You can be in some professions because there are so many traditions that keeps the

president from being a dictator. So, when he tries to be, they kill him. So, if you want your way, you have to become exceedingly persuasive. And when you say something, they have to know, that's what you mean. So that over the years, they begin to trust because they are never surprised. They may not like it all the time, but they're never surprised you're consistent in how you function. And when you say something, that's what you mean. And that's what you'll do. And if you can't do it, you go right back and say, I said, I was going to do it. Sorry, I can't. And these are the reasons why, so that's kind of wrapped up.

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Gerry Cooke (22:40):

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We talk a lot now in higher education and I'm new coming back, stepping out of the corporate world. So, this is new to me. It's kind of like entering into a different culture again, although I have roots, it's interesting as I hear instructors talk about the need to teach students soft skills or what are now being called human skills and to listen to you because you're such a fine order succinctly put in, say what you mean, do what you say when you can't brilliant.

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Don Lubbers (23:20):

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Like I said, in one of my speeches our profession as faculty members and running an institution is sacred. And why is it sacred? Because you're dealing with people who are in some of their most formative years determining and gaining the skills they're going to use to make a life for themselves. So that's sacred. So, think of yourselves in a sacred profession. And if you knew that, then you really begin to understand what a teacher is. And I think that worked quite well at Grand Valley. We, we did build, and even when I came, there were wonderful faculty members. The, the, the structure, the foundation was good. And it was easy for me to pick it up. We had to do things, change things and build things because it grew so rapidly, but it was a sacred profession. And I've always thought of it that way.

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Gerry Cooke (24:48):

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Let me ask you about Bill Seidman. So other than the things that I have read that are available for anyone to read now, that's one of the blessings, I guess, with all the negative things that come with our internet connection some days, what do you want,

what stories should be told about Bill Seidman to today's students, not only those that obviously enter the building and are educated on the building, upon which his name is etched.

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Don Lubbers (25:19):

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Well, I'm a believer that individuals make history that what they do and how they think is important. They're not just, you know, manipulated by a greater forest at what they do. They, they are, for what, for whatever reason they are, who they are and what they are Grand Valley would not exist without Bill Seidman's vision and energy and political skills. He is the founder of the institution. He had a lot of help and Grand Valley was a part of a greater picture which was being painted by Dick Gillette and Bob Pew and, and Ed Frey many. And then coming along a little later Fred Meyer, Rich DeVos, Jay VanAndel. Bill was part of that energy that has created the present Grand Rapids and West Michigan. It, I refer to it sometimes as the Seidman era or the Gillette era, because they were leaders, energizers, pushed different kinds of projects were instrumental in bringing some of these men that I've mentioned into the game to build Grand, Grand rapids.

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Don Lubbers (27:12):

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So, Seidman was that. Um in West Michigan conservative area, people really didn't care to spend tax money, tax money. We don't, we don't need tax money. Well, Bill Seidman was a free enterpriser, but he understood that you send your taxes to the government and they make a pie, and then they distribute that pie. And since you contribute to the pie, why shouldn't you get some of it back? And that was somewhat new to West Michigan and Grand Rapids. And Bill Seidman was, was one of the founders, not only, not only the founder of Grand Valley, but one of the founders of modern-day Grand Rapids and West Michigan. And then of course, he went on to do remarkable work and the, in the federal government. And he was Dean of a business school at Arizona State. He was the executive vice president of a copper company.

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Don Lubbers (28:29):

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And he had all these talents. Bill was, had one of the most intelligent, rapid moving minds that I've ever observed. He thought quickly. And he thought correctly about

matters of public policy and free enterprise. In addition to this unbelievable facility to think and, and think and initiate he could take, he could move from the abstract to the practical almost instantly. It would be, we've been talking about mentorship. He loved being a mentor. He helped more young people. And when I came to Grand Rapids as president, and he was chairman of the board, he, he introduced me to what I needed to, to whom I needed to be introduced, both people and situations. And he helped me immensely learn the territory. I knew the territory from the past, but he updated me on the territory. So, he was a great mentor to me and I could, I would go into his office.

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Don Lubbers (30:11):

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And at the end of the day, he was downtown Grand Rapids, a managing partner of Seidman, Seidman, and I'd come in from Allendale and we'd sit down and talk about things. I could try anything I could mention to him. He always had an intelligent response, always a smart response, both in the practical thing to do and the personal thing to do. So, I had a great admiration for him. And I think I was better in my job because of him because he was a good mentor and he had people all over that he mentored. He'd help them out, get them a job.

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Don Lubbers (31:03):

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I, I can, I can name a lot of them. I won't take the time to do that, but they're all over the place. So, he was, he was a good me-mentor. He was a man on the move, endless energy. He died at 88 years of age because he'd gone to San Francisco. I think it was to, to participate in some bankers meeting. And he was sick when he went, and on the way home really, and the airplane. I think the infection overwhelmed him and taken to the hospital and he died or that infection. He, he, you couldn't keep him down. He, the last year of his life, he really needed to take it a little more easy and solve a bacteriological situation, I think. I'm not sure, but that's the way I size it up from a distance, but he couldn't have that. He, he had to keep churning and he kept churning. That was just his nature. And so, he died when he was 88 years old, going at a hundred miles an hour. And that was this Bill. He could not stop the pace.

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Gerry Cooke (32:29):

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The vision. I think that Bill, and again, anybody can go out and look at this. Two things that, that you triggered in my mind, as I hear you speak about Bill. One is, I remember a particular speech that was recorded, where the announcer comes up and says, Hey, we have Bill coming up and then says all the things that the pre-speaker is supposed to say, and then Bill doesn't come out because Bill's in the back talking to students. So, the whole program has to wait and the speaker comes back out and now has to adlib something and says, well, Bill's with the students. And, you know, here's some numbers or whatever it was, what else was going on in the meeting? Because Bill was with the students.

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Don Lubbers (33:13):

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And when he was involved and he loved being involved with young people when he was involved in something, there were no time constraints and he just do what he had to do. Then he'd go onto the next thing. Schedules were not high on his time. Schedules were not high on his list. I remember one time having a party at our house and I wanted Bill to be there. And I, for some reason, I don't remember it was important to me that he'd be there on time because he never was on time. So, I said to him, Bill our, our parties at six o'clock and you make it and then, yeah. Okay, I'll be there. And so, I did that because the party was at 6:30 and I, I was sure that, you know, he never, I never found him to be on time. Well, of course, when would he be on time as Nancy and I were finishing dressing for the party?

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Gerry Cooke (34:22):

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Well, you get some free one-on-one Bill time that way, which sounds like it was pretty precious in and of itself because everybody wanted a piece of Bill's time. I, right,

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Don Lubbers (34:31):

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Right. No, no Bill and I had a, had a good relationship. Bill moved from project that interests him to project that interested him. And he liked, he liked politics. He liked to be involved. He liked to be influential in the outcomes. So, he just moved on and he came back and was chair of our board for a while. But he was kind of a non-resident then. And the newspaper went after him. So, he, he stayed with Grand Valley a long time. And of course, he always was interested in Grand Valley and he wanted his, his Memorial

service to be at Grand Valley. So Grand Valley was important to him and I appreciated that he gave generously himself and his foundation continues to do so at times it's a Grand Valley was an important part his life. But when he felt Grand Valley was established and moving along, he'd come back and do things, but he was on to other things and nationally important things.

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Gerry Cooke (35:51):

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The second thing that, that triggered was a speech that you gave where you were talking about the founding of Grand Valley, and you likened it to an infant that was born to middle-aged parents as a surprise, that area of Grand Rapids. And you go on to point out the vision of some of the folks that you mentioned that look around Grand Rapids, and you'll see their names at the VanAndels' and the DeVos' and their, the Pews the vision that Bill had, and you continued in my mind, was to involve the private sector into the support of the university. And that was a new concept, right? I mean, you, you didn't go hat in hand to the legislature and say, we need money to start a university. You did almost more of a matching situation where we'll produce the, I think it was a million dollars we had to come up with first, but the real success, I think of Grand Valley is the fact of how much money it does not draw from public coffers, but is supported by private donation and interest that sustains not only Grand Valley, but west Michigan as a whole, who has that vision?

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Don Lubbers (37:07):

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Well, that of course is Bill Seidman and the, his colleagues who decided they wanted a state institution here and they made it a community, West Michigan community project, and that's never changed. And it would be a great error if Grand Valley became like some universities that feel self-contained and responsible to educate people, but not responsible necessarily for the community around them. And that concept for a new state institution, particularly, that it was a West Michigan community project and should be continually supported by the West Michigan community. And it should also serve the needs of the West Michigan community. That is a Bill Seidman that, that's what we've inherited from his vision. And all of us who've come subsequently have reinforced that vision and continued it and we couldn't, we couldn't do it without them, without that Grand Valley is so conditioned by that, that it, it should not change.

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Don Lubbers (38:45):

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And I think that's one of the reasons our community, our community commitment did two things. One, it made us aware of professional needs of the community and started professional needs alongside our strong liberal arts core. So there, I remember when we wanted to start a nursing school, that wasn't necessarily because we wanted it. The hospitals were getting rid of their nursing education programs. They wanted us to have a nursing program. Well, not, I wouldn't be surprised that others in the state didn't want us to have a nursing program. So, it was a big political battle, but we got a nursing program. It was a big political battle to get an engineering school, but we want one, we, we won because we were persistent and because the community needed it. And it was not just what Grand Valley was doing. It was Grand Valley and the community that wanted it, and that gave the political punch that we needed to get those things done.

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Don Lubbers (40:06):

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That was very important. And the second thing I think it we never tried to be a little university, big university, never tried to be a little University of Michigan or tried to be like them or develop that way. We were a community institution looking for how we could do things best for the West Michigan community, not to become a great research university. And most institutions that get started, the universities, they tend to like to be like the, the major university, all the state teachers, colleges turned universities, they all kind of like to be big, major research universities. We never went that route though. We encouraged faculty to do research. We built institute, institutes to do research, but we were interested in serving what the community needs. That is, they need to educate their students, older adults and professions need help and education. And I think that commitment, the community, started by Bill Seidman, had kept us on a vision, never allowed us to desert that, that vision and serving that vision made a very fine university.

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Gerry Cooke (41:50):

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What's it like for you now? And I see you get passionate. I almost want to ask you if you miss it, but I'm not going to ask you if you miss it.

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Don Lubbers (41:58):

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No, I don't miss it because I'm close enough to it, to enjoy it.

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Gerry Cooke (42:02):

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The, that was my, that was going to be my point of why I wasn't going to ask you, but I wonder what it's like. I described this to somebody the other day when they said, oh, you're back at Grand Valley. What that, what's that like? And I said, I've had these surreal moments when I was walking. And it usually occurs to me between Kirkhof and Zumberg, for some reason there by the pond, I walk a particular piece of concrete on the campus, and I have this flash of vision to a younger me. And I think about the trials and tribulations of a, of a 20-year-old me and I thinking about this arduous situation and how will I ever overcome it? And I had been on campus again in a different capacity, a professional capacity as a vendor to the university for a while. And then I was in my thirties and I had the same vision.

00:02:56,000 → 00:02:57,000
Gerry Cooke (42:58):

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And I thought, how silly of 20-year-old me, we overcame that. But the current crisis is much grander than that. Well, now I'm back again. And it happened to me the other day when I was walking that stretch. And now I'm in my late forties. And I wonder, what does it feel like for you? We met under the arch today. Once we settled on which arch we were meeting under here at the Pew campus, part of your design, you approved by the way what's it like to walk around and watch your vision in action.

00:03:00,000 → 00:03:01,000
Don Lubbers (43:36):

00:03:02,000 → 00:03:03,000
It's one of the great pleasures I have in my life is to watch Grand Valley and be able to walk around. One of my major tenants in administration was make the campus beautiful, inside rooms and outside rooms because people work better, think better, feel better when they're in an environment that's beautiful. Even if they're not aware of that, it happens. It works. I know it works and I won't cite the reason, practical reasons that I know it, but I know it works. So, it works for me too. I like to walk around because the campus, campuses are beautiful and the buildings are well-maintained and well-designed. And so, I walk through them, some that I participated in designing and some that came after me and some before me, and that was another thing that, that Bill Seidman insisted on good architecture from the very beginning.

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Don Lubbers (44:58):

00:03:06,000 → 00:03:07,000
So, when I came here, here, it was a very small, but a very attractive campus. And it's so I was always committed to make it beautiful. So now I, I can enjoy that beauty. So, the physical presence of the campus is very it to me. And then I, you know, how, how can I not be interested in rather unusual that all my successors have been very kind to me and you know, that doesn't happen all the time. One of my colleagues who retired so that his successor gave the command to the people in his administration that when the former president came around and make sure he's sitting in the back of the room. Hmm, interesting. Now I've never had that. They've, they've been so courteous and so pleasant to me and so inclusive of Nancy and me and university activities that I'm so happy. We didn't go away that we, but you see, I've told you that I was mentored by people who love the places where they were, not just the job they were doing. And I think that's the way I am. I love West Michigan. I love Grand Rapids. I love Grand Valley. I love my Alma Mater, Hope College. I, you know, all those things. I, I'm happy that I was mentored to appreciate things. And so, yeah, I'm around here appreciating all the time.

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Gerry Cooke (46:54):

00:03:10,000 → 00:03:11,000
Gratitude and appreciation are great ways to start your day. I think it's uh, it's well said. I know a very good tonic, at least for me in my formal years that helped developed my self-assurance and, and I know you're a fan of, so I want to ask you about it. And it's international study. I know that you are, you are a supporter of you helped create programs for overseas study. How important is it for the student that's listening, that's on the fence and well, it's going to cost me a couple extra bucks and I might have to go overseas. How important is international nowadays for student education?

00:03:12,000 → 00:03:13,000
Don Lubbers (47:36):

00:03:14,000 → 00:03:15,000
Well, as the world shrinks, I think it's relatively important. We have a population that is not as, so well-educated on foreign policy as it should be the more people who can leave their environment and culture and experience another one the better off they'll be able to evaluate how we as a nation react to other nations. And it also opens up one's mind here you are in an environment you've never experienced before often with a language that is foreign to you or a language that you've been studying. And now you're trying to become fluid in it. You were in an, in an environment you have never been in before. And that experience of finding out other people don't live the way you

live is valuable. Number one, it could be valuable in your profession. And number two, it could be valuable in your, perhaps learning to understand, humility, that what you are and what you come from is not the only thing. And that there are other people who think and do things a bit differently. And they're okay, too.

00:03:16,000 → 00:03:17,000
Gerry Cooke (49:24):

00:03:18,000 → 00:03:19,000
When you think about the legacy that you leave and what do you want to be remembered, what do you want to be remembered for?

00:03:20,000 → 00:03:21,000
Don Lubbers (49:32):

00:03:22,000 → 00:03:23,000
Um I don't have much of a, a conscious need to be remembered for something. Having said that, I have, I take such great pleasure in being permitted a career that pleased me. And you know, most of us are not remembered more than a little while. So, it really, it really doesn't matter. What matters most to me is the overwhelming gratitude I feel for having been allowed to live a life that has given me pleasure and success, happiness as well, there's trials and tribulations by of course, but I did what I wanted to do from the time I was 29 years old until the time I was 70, I was engaged in the profession. That's the only one I ever really wanted to be in. Now, how fortunate is that? You know, so no, to be remembered is not important to me. It's just having been what I was and am. I'm so grateful, you know, we're, we're born into an environment we don't choose, and we have a genetic makeup for which we have no responsibility. And those are two pretty important that, they make us in so many ways. So why should we take credit? Or why should we want to be remembered if you, with your genes and your environment, you luck out by doing what you want to do. Just be grateful for that.

00:03:24,000 → 00:03:25,000
Gerry Cooke (52:00):

00:03:26,000 → 00:03:27,000
President Emeritus Don Lubbers, my president, or president, my president, what an honor to get in, to speak to you. And I, I regret the fact, I didn't take the opportunity 20, 25, maybe 30 years ago to walk into your office. And introduce myself. I certainly wasn't equipped to have this conversation at that time, but I wish I had the courage to take that opportunity. And I thank you behalf of myself, but behalf of Grand Valley and the students for the, the programs, systems, legacy, campus, I can go on and on and on the

things that you, Bill, and so many others have done for us. And I appreciate it. And I thank you.

00:03:28,000 → 00:03:29,000
Don Lubbers (52:45):

00:03:30,000 → 00:03:31,000
No thank you. It's been nice being, being with you. All old people like to reminisce

00:03:32,000 → 00:03:33,000
Gerry Cooke (52:52):

00:03:34,000 → 00:03:35,000
Well, you, during our whole interview, you bring to the fore what it means to be the T Los, if you will, there I'll throw my Latin in there of what it means to be a community member, not just of Grand Valley, not just of Grand Rapids, not just of West Michigan, but as society and a call. I hear you for civility and the true reward I hear you in life is the relationships we have with each other, not the treasure we amass, not the, where we leave our names, whether it's chiseled in stone or forgotten on the wayside, but on the lips and in the hearts of the people that we mentor and the folks that we touch in our lives. And, and though we haven't formally done that. I feel that I feel that paternal love from you and I truly actually appreciate you and this time.

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Don Lubbers (53:46):

00:03:38,000 → 00:03:39,000
Well, I've appreciated it.

00:03:40,000 → 00:03:41,000
Gerry Cooke (56:23):

00:03:42,000 → 00:05:00,000
Thank you for sailing along on this episode of the Seidman mentorship podcast. For more information on the Seidman school of business mentorship program at Grand Valley State University set your heading to www.gvsu.edu/Seidman. If you have a story to tell, know someone we should interview, have questions or comments, email us at go2gvbiz@gvsu.edu. Until next time, keep a weathered eye on the horizon and we wish you Fairwinds so long.