Thank you. All those kind words and words of praise make me recall a little book I’ve carried with me with my bird list and so forth for many years, and I had a poem in there by Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias.” Some of you may have memorized that poem. When you hear that much praise you worry a little bit about whether we over-do it, but in the long run, I’m grateful for it. Thank you very much.

The other thing I might say is that in the 50s and 60s I used to do a little weather segment on a College of Agriculture program called Farm, Home and Garden that the extension service put on. After hearing Anne Riley talk about this insect place that will be here, I am reminded that I always followed the “Insect of the Week” segment, and I sort of resented that at that time.

One of the greatest events in human history probably was the meeting of a group of people in Philadelphia about 229 years ago, most of whom were farmers or horticulturists. John Adams corresponded with his wife about his fruit trees up in Quincy, Massachusetts. Jefferson traveled throughout Europe, collecting plant materials for his farm at Monticello. To this day, you can go to Mount Vernon and walk in the shade of giant yellow poplars that were planted by George Washington, and the same is true at Monticello. Some of those trees still survive. So planting trees is in the old American tradition.

At the same time that those people were planting trees, at the time of the founding of this country, as was mentioned, this field was a mature forest of beech and oak and chestnut, some of them six feet in diameter, and while they were planting trees in Virginia, the settlers who moved into this valley about 1776, were cutting them down. They were cutting them down to produce charcoal to make iron, to have wood for their barns and for their homes, and can you picture digging a six-foot chestnut stump out of this field, hundreds of them, to get this little piece of land to plant some crops? Those were sturdy folks, indeed, and so in a sense, we’ve completed a cycle. We’ve returned to the process of putting an oak out here and if you listened very carefully as that oak was lowered into the hole, I think you could have heard the earth say, “They’re back!”

I think it is a wonderful thing, the creation and beginning of this arboretum. I came from down in Chester County and some of you I am sure have visited Longwood Gardens. My wife Anna and I used to visit there quite often and were inspired by what we found there. Anna came from a town in Switzerland called “Winterthur.” Some of you may have been
to Winterthur, Delaware. That town is named for the town where my wife came from because one of the du Ponts married a Bidermann who lived about two blocks from where my wife grew up, and so she named the place where they lived there “Winterthur.” So Anna and I both appreciated the garden and the nice forest and azalea display they have down at Winterthur. In fact, there is a yellow poplar down there that is over 600 years old, just off the parking lot, which most people haven’t seen at Winterthur.

So it’s a wonderful thing that we have created this arboretum, and I hope that a hundred years from now as people stroll through this place and appreciate it, they will look back with gratitude on the people who made it possible. And I would certainly like to thank the trustees, Graham Spanier, Dean Steele, and Kim Steiner and his staff, Kathy Reeder, and so forth, for the effort they are putting forth. This is going to be a tremendous job. I hope they don’t have to put slot machines in the casinos to pay for it, but it may well be. The Governor may be after Graham soon to put slot machines in the dormitories. (It’s a big thing in Pennsylvania just now to raise money.)

But particularly, I would like to thank George Biemesderfer and his family and Chuck for the effort they made to put this tree here in my honor. I am not sure that I gave you such good advice, George, but I’ll take the compliment anyhow. And I am certainly extremely honored to have my name and Anna’s name associated with this arboretum, with this effort. And I hope that all of you, in your own way, support it to the extent that you can. I know I certainly will, even without the slot machines in the casinos. Thank you.