
GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Lee T. Todd Jr. To Lead UK

By Liz Howard Demoran

“Lee Todd, Lee Todd, Lee Todd, Lee Todd”

A train of kids weaved their way through the house adding their chant to the celebration that spontaneously broke out as family and friends gathered following the announcement that Lee T. Todd Jr. had been named the 11th president of the University of Kentucky.

These well wishers were just the first of many who would join in the chorus of expectations that would fall on the shoulders of this new president. In the weeks following his selection, Todd received over 400 e-mails, an uncounted number of letters and cards, a parade of visits from University deans and countless others who had a comment or concern to share. The *Lexington Herald-Leader* was not shy about recommending an agenda for this Kentucky leader in higher education who was embarking on a new avenue of influence.

“Expectations are pretty high,” he chuckled. “If I thought about it being just about me, the job would be very difficult, but there are a lot of people around the state and at the University that want to participate in moving Kentucky forward.”

His wife of 33 years, Patsy Brantley Todd, confirms that he shows less pressure than anyone she has ever known. “I can feel when he’s concerned,” she says, “Lots of times I can tell because of the thought processes going on in his head. He’s here, but he’s not here; you know, I say ‘Did you hear what I just said?’”

She’s also seen him in action behind the scenes at theatrical productions at Dunbar High School, helping the students with lightning quick costume changes. “Now that’s pressure,” she says.

One quickly learns in talking with this first Baby Boomer couple to take up residence in Maxwell Place, that they are sincerely interested in relationships and enjoy people, conversation and ideas. They define family in a broad sense and want their lives filled with all the best of that concept.

They built this sense of community at the two companies, DataBeam and Projectron, that Todd founded based on patents he developed as a graduate student at MIT. “If you talk to any of the employees at those two companies, they’ll tell you they feel like family.”

The Todds want to see that same sense of a caring commu-

nity grow on this campus. “We want the campus to be highly collaborative both electronically and from a sense of community. We’ve got to have much better ways to communicate both internally around campus and externally with our alumni.”

The couple also believes that Maxwell Place belongs to the University, to the students, faculty and alumni. “It certainly is the place where we want to live and be a part of the campus so that we understand what goes on,” says Patsy Todd. “It would be my goal,” she adds, “that from the time a student enters UK to graduation, that they would have an opportunity to tour that house. I would just hope that no one who wanted to see that historic home would leave here without doing so. How to do that? Well, we’ve discussed various ways to make that happen.”

Opening the house and grounds as a place where professors and students can gather from time to time to just talk with each other and exchange ideas, and hosting a reception for new faculty are among their ideas. When Todd returned to UK as an assistant professor, Patsy was chairperson of the Faculty Welcome Wagon group, and some of these ideas stem from that experience.

The listening process for Todd began during the presidential search. The 13-member committee, chaired by UK Trustee JoEtta Y. Wickliffe, president and CEO of State Bank and Trust Company in Harrodsburg, set up town meetings throughout the state to hear what people wanted in a new president and then scheduled on-campus forums with faculty, staff and alumni for the three finalists.

Such forums fit Todd’s style perfectly. “That day really is somewhat of a blur,” recalls Todd. “I talked to so many people and heard a number of concerns and a number of ideas while trying to share some of my vision for the University. But I like to openly communicate with people. I like to get all of the information I can and all of the input I can on every issue, and then make a decision. You’ve got to get the concerns on the table and then people can see how you get to your decision, even if you don’t get to their conclusion. In so many cases, a decision hangs out there too long and that is the worst thing that can happen. I feel you have to hire really good people and support them. I

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Among the concerns Todd heard from faculty and staff were the need for an administrative structure that is smaller and more responsive. He is making that his first priority come July 1 when he takes office. Diversity and gender equity issues were another concern as the Status of Women Report was being released, assessing the gains in gender equity at UK over the past ten years.

Asked about the importance of a staff trustee, "First, I said that that vote is just as important as any other. Then I said, 'It's more important.' (UK) is their livelihood. That representative brings a perspective to the board that no one else can provide. Doing some work with the government, I found out that generals and admirals change frequently; the staffers are the ones that are always there."

From the students, he heard concern about the disappearing green space on campus. In fact, the Todds took a stroll around campus to see first-hand what the students were talking about. As they were walking past the dorms, a voice shouted out the window to them, "Mr. and Mrs. Todd." It was one of their daughter's friends who went on to say, "We've got a problem here." The problem they talked about was parking. "I just felt we needed to talk to the guy at the top," she said, and it never occurred to her not to do that.

Students also have noted the need for a replacement area like the fountain area near the Patterson Office Tower where students used to meet and mingle. "There are some things I think we can do right away," Todd told some other students later and then spoke of a broader plan that would address other concerns about the campus lifestyle defined by student facilities.

Other students he met expressed a curiosity about the difference between UK and MIT, where he earned his doctorate and developed patents that he later turned into businesses. He pointed out that one of the differences is when you walk through the student lounge, the students aren't talking about basket-

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ball, they're talking about starting businesses or something new or doing something that is intellectually and economically driven and competitive. "When I went up there, the thing that struck me most was the competitiveness. They liked learning. If you weren't in the lab at all kind of crazy hours, you could be sure someone else was!"

Alumni asked questions about research, outreach and the role of alumni in his vision for the University.

Todd says it is time to move the idea of the University to a new level. Todd knows that people in Kentucky have not typically looked to universities as drivers of economic development with the exception of creating a few jobs for bookstore operators and cafeteria workers. He feels that is changing as Kentucky loses some of its traditional businesses like tobacco. "People are more receptive now to looking at alternatives. The alternatives on the East Coast and West Coast have all come around the universities. I think we can find alumni around the country that can get excited about that in different ways than we have asked them to in the past. One of Kentucky's greatest resources is the people that we have lost.

"I think we have got to pick up our pace in research, clearly, and we have to have our faculty and researchers thinking about commercialization and help them understand what that process is, and then take it to the public level. We have opportunities in agriculture, Alzheimer's and pharmaceuticals that we should get to a different level.

"We can become even more involved in research that hits the ground addressing issues in this state like the rural, aging population and adult illiteracy. We are making headway in primary and secondary education, but where are the best practices? There are farm issues to address. Those are things we need to know as much about as we possibly can so that some of our University research is really affecting the daily lives of our people. That work will be internationally publishable and I think we can see funding for that kind of focus."

When talking about rankings, Todd thinks a lot is left on the table if the label is just a Top 20 research university. To him, it makes more sense for the University of Kentucky to talk about being a Top 20 public university. That concept gives more flexibility in how the top is defined and that determines how the University's impact will be measured. There are many ways to build a Top 20 university. "I will be putting together a program for us to touch all the constituencies that have an opinion about what Top 20 means. We have got to come to some conclusion about what it means so that we can measure it because if you don't measure it, you will never get there."

He heard the concern of faculty in the liberal arts who wondered if an engineer, an inventor and a businessman would take from their areas to shore up the hard sciences. "Some people tried to make me an out-of-the-box candidate, but I think I'm in the box. I have a broad range of interests. There are a lot of things I want to learn more about. Patsy is a marvelous piano player. We love New York and the plays. We have done these things all of our lives. What I am trying to tell the faculty is that they have to come up with the ideas and we will support them. We will share their pain and see how we can accommodate them and try to raise the dollars needed for that side of campus to feel balanced. You are never going to have a great university

if you have a lop-sided campus. If we try to make Top 20 on pure research alone, we will fail.”

Todd says alumni can do three things for the University, help with fund raising, help recruit students in and out of the state and help by sharing ideas and dreams.

“I want to drive the enrollment. I don’t want to ever miss our enrollment numbers again. I don’t know what it’s going to take yet to do that, but Patsy and I are going to be around the state and other places talking to groups and talking to families to make sure that everybody knows the University of Kentucky really wants their students to come here.”

Todd says alumni around the country who have a real fond-

ness for this state can be a “tremendous” help by funneling back ideas of what we can do to populate the Coldstream Research Park, how we can commercialize some of the University’s research, and tell us what they have seen happening with universities they have gotten to know since they left Kentucky. They are going to be a channel we are really going to cultivate.

“I’ve already said I want a very strong academic officer and a very strong budget arm on campus because I want to spend substantial time in Washington (DC), in Frankfort, around Kentucky and around the U.S., and a lot of that time will be with alumni.”



The Todd Family File

Dr. Lee T. Todd Jr.

Patricia Brantley Todd

Birthdate: May 6, 1946

March 20, 1946

Married: May 18, 1968

Children: Troy, 25, and Kathryn, 20

Nickname: Tro

Patsy

Favorite Snack: Snickers and milk
in the middle of the night

Ice cream, any flavor

Favorite Past time: Jigsaw puzzles and
shooting pool

Playing the piano, especially the
Warsaw Concerto; Taking and
Framing photographs

Our Song: “A Summer Place” That song strikes our heart chords.
That movie had Troy Donohue and Sandra Dee in it.
It’s even where we got our son’s name. We couldn’t call him Tro
because of me nor Lee because of my dad.

Something people might not know about me is:

He loves to shop.

She was Junior Miss of Hopkins Co.

UK Degree: BS Electrical Engineering, 1968

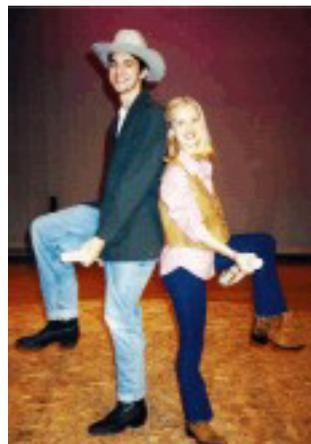
BS Home Economics, 1968

College Residence: 455 Columbia Ave.

The Complex

College Roommate: Bill White
of Hopkinsville

Beth Houck McLaughlin
of Fayette County



From the far left, Lee and Patsy Todd at their senior prom. Best buds since first grade, the couple married after graduating from UK in 1968. • Son Troy who spent a “Semester at Sea” will return to Africa in July with the Peace Corps. • Daughter “Kat”, shown here with David Schlumpf, was a regular in theatrical performances at Dunbar High School, and also had a role with a professional New York touring company production of “Annie.”