Years of Service Celebration 2017 & 2018
By Duncan Nelson

But first before I begin to raise
My song I shall don my bardic bays
With which I shall suitably crown
This paean of praise writ to fit your renown!

Sitting here in my Zero Gravity Chair,
Though wishing of course to be there
With you, still thrilled to be able to share --
Thanks to Jesso’s Zoom camera -- how much I care
For these Years of Service Celebrations
At which I’ve delivered perorations
For literally generations.
In the beginning, I would name
Each one. But now, if in my poem
I would through the whole roster roam
We’d be here long past the cows coming home!

Under auspice of Hospice I’m not set to run
Much longer, still before I’m done,
What a thrill to again have the good fun
Of cheering once again this growing
Group which has shown no signs of slowing,
But rather shown that it is going
As strong as ever, if not more so,
Possessed from the start with the force o’
Gravity in its unerring bent
Towards grounding us in a firmament
Of education writ large,
Where collaboration is in charge,
And no one gets left out on the margins, where everyone is let in
And encouraged to help the world spin
In the right direction -- so that in time,
As we come to address climate change, our water and land and air
Will flourish under our stewardship’s care
Now our very survival has been laid bare.

Pardon, pray, that long preamble,
And prepare yourself for the next gamble:
How am I going to ever find ample
Space to hail to some rightful degree
This plethora, this panoply
Of admin, staff, and faculty
That have made UMB
A warp and woof web of integrity,
Where everyone has each other’s back,
Where everyone is on the same tack,
Looking out to see that we nothing lack --
Yea, bringing to reality
The kind of practicality
That can deal with the task’s totality.

Though most bards, faced with a full year’s hiatus,
Would search out an excuse to choose a quietus,
But when I’m faced with a group as great as
This, I can only think of what fun
It will be once more to rambunctiously run
Through this harvest of names to hail what you’ve done,
Faculty, Admin, and Staff --
Wheat threshed so fine there’s no trace of chaff
That has lifted us clear off every graph
In terms of their absolute dedication
To a spirit of total cooperation
In making our service the best in the nation.
When I first came here I could tell my seed
Was being planted on grounds that would breed
An atmosphere that would fill the world’s need.
And what’s true is the side that we are on,
In terms of the question our fate hinges on:
“Utopia or Oblivion?”
Ours is a vote for new dawns,
As in water like Ponce de Leon’s,
We’re made whole again to remain so for eons.

But if I’m to keep to my four page pace,
I must now cut to the chase
And best as I can embrace
By selecting a few names to glory
In from each five year category
Hope you’ll find it hunky-dory
In terms of a random encapsulation
To form a deep recapitulation
Of my recapitulation
Of a roster second to none in the nation
In terms of how our staff has been dealing
With this plant from floor to ceiling,
From walls to halls with hands of healing.
Oh there have been occasional glitches,
An elevator that downward pitches
In the dormitories that so enrich us.
And this is where we can witness the drama
Of our rapid responses. Ours is an armor
Tempered to deal with all manner of trauma.

So here I go, yes a bit nervous
To deal with a two-fer on ten years of service.
Now you’ll get to know what my learning curve is
As I espy on that ten year horizon
One Ki Lee and Paul Dyson,
Whom I consider almost my son;
Paul Foos, Pacey Foster, nor will this list lack
Evidence of my growing knack
For pairing Duc Tran with Tim Killingback.
Moving along to 2018
There’s Wei Ding and Harlan Dean,
Heather MacIndoe and Steven Levine
And Nancy Chincholi from whom we roll
Down to Chaiwut Chittkusoll;
And on Katherine Kiss let’s give apt bestowal.
And here let’s go all the way up
To Wen Fan Yan and Susan Zup.
And here permit me an interu-
tion tossed in to say that our fame’s
Widespread for having the world’s best names.
So now I shall begin to screen
Those who’ve lifted us for years fifteen,
Such as Paula Cameron, right-hand of her dean;
Kaliopi Regas, Sheryl Nix-
on, Dragana Bolcic-Jankovic,
With Jess Medoff and Ursula Tafe in the mix.
And let a cheer well up from beneath
For our man of steel, much-missed Chancellor Keith;
And with my bardic bays let me wreath
Meesh McCarthy and Eden Medagaia.
I really wish I could name off all-ya,
But there are so many the sum would appal’ya.

As for those who served for years 20,
There’s Rajini Srikanth, Dung Do, and aplenty
Of others, whom as we circumvent we
Thank for the wonderful run for our money
At IT, thanks to Andrew Arcadipane.
And moving along to complete my song we
Hail those whose long indentury
Has been for a quarter century,
Of whom I can more than venture we
Would have been much much the poorer
Had not Kahrim Wade and Bernadette Levasseur
Made of Quinn Graphics the best place to do your
Best work. And let’s raise a fuss
Over Peter Bonitatibus.
But now, alas, I really mus-
Move on to 30, where we may
See Randy Albelda, Elizabeth Fay,
And my dear Marie Der, and along the way
Encounter James Glenn and Marla Filoso,
Along with that name that’s really oh so
Hard I should really let it go, though
This is the sort of challenge your bard
Delights in: Sedigheh Moosivifard!
And now what turns up on my dance card
Are years 35, 40 and 45,
All of them very much “alive”
And kicking and long to thrive.
So let me now be a bit choosy and picky,
Hailing Amy Chin, Neal Bruss, and Leon Zurawicki,
With a bow respectful for Paul Watanabe,
Jonathan Chu, and I also lobby
For David Terkla. And now kimo sabe,
The Lone Ranger saddles up for the hat trick
Of those who would verge on the geriatric
Were it not for some kind of current electric
That allowed Susan Irving and Michael Rex
And John Ebersole to escape the hex
Of age; and coming up next,
Hitting the half century mark
Are Vendela Carlson whose chocolate chips spark
The Department of Phil. And we also hark
To the evergrowing reminder
That Dennis Wortman and Paul Bookbinder
Might go on forever, but now it’s time t’er
Pound tables and give huzzas and hooras
In volley on volley of self-applause
To a magic greater than that of Oz
That has mastered all matters of service, is able
To year after year keep this ship stable
And strong, a feat that can beat any fable.
So now at last I shall subside,
As one who has long taken pride
In this school upon which I’ve had such a great ride
And in my heart shall forever abide.