

THE CHRONICLE

Acclaimed Journalist Talks Leadership

By ADAM BUND

Mark Walton, Peabody Award-winning journalist and former Senior CNN Correspondent, marched into the Sanford Institute of Public Policy last night and illustrated to an audience of businesspeople, professionals and students what it means to be an effective leader and top achiever.

Walton, founding Director of the Program on Global Leadership Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Chairman of The Walton Leadership Center—a global leadership development organization—began by underlining the significance of his multi-media presentation entitled “The Essence of Leadership.” “This evening is an opportunity for you to meet yourselves...a journey to an extraordinary place, a way of doing things almost no one experiences. We must find our way through...a portal of understanding.” The journey, Walton added, requires the aid of experienced guides.

Walton provided those guides through eight exclusive large-screen interviews featuring McDonald’s CEO Michael Quinlan, Coca-Cola former President Donald Keough, Senator Nancy Kassebaum, CNN Chief Anchor Bernard Shaw, Duke University President Nan Keohane and other accomplished leaders.

All of these men and women began “from scratch,” Walton said. Before dreams of a career in government, Kassebaum found herself mired in a divorce. Similarly, before applying to a Ph.D. program at Yale, Keohane was faced with a possible burden of supporting her husband’s graduate education. Keohane, recalling the hours before submitting her application to Yale, said, “I had the horrible feeling that I was shutting the door.” Yet, Walton said, there is something in these women—in every successful person—which eliminates complacency and the impulse to quit.

The answer to failure, he said, can be summed up in one word: vision. “Vision is the mother of all problems and the father of all goals,” Walton said.

Keough, who switched careers to investment banking at the age of 67, explained the importance of being willing to start again. “I asked myself all the questions a 23-year-old asks when they begin a business career, a career in academia... ‘will they find out [that he was inexperienced in the field]?’”

Determination facilitated Keough’s decision to start a new career when most people retire, Walton said. Utilizing an anecdote about Chris Evert, Walton also emphasized the distinction between short



CARA BRICKMAN/THE CHRONICLE

Mark Walton speaks at the Sanford Institute.

term goals and a transcendent vision. The tennis legend, after realizing her goal of winning Wimbledon, fell into a deep depression. Her problem, according to Walton, was a lack of internal confidence and flexibility.

To illustrate the necessity of these constants, Walton asked the audience to write down their own hopes, dreams and ambitions and consider their own confidence and flexibility.

Despite the rainy weather and the competition of Kurt Vonnegut, attendance was substantial.

Ed Pringle, a faculty member at the UNC business school, attended the speech to see his colleague in action. “[The presentation] was terrific,” Pringle

said. “The speech made me reflect on my own life.”

Bob Korstad, director of the Hart Leadership Program, said, “I went in expecting generic career development lessons, five steps to this, eight steps to that... but it was fascinating to see the people Mark interviewed and very empowering to experience them so personally.”

“Mark Walton showed how each of us can be a leader in our own sphere, in our own way. It was wonderful....”

SALES EXECUTIVE ANNE JONES
