



Remarks by Gregory W. Powell, Chairman  
Harold Alfond Foundation

**Reception Honoring Coach Dick MacPherson**  
September 26, 2009  
Syracuse, NY

Good Afternoon.

On behalf of the Harold Alfond Foundation, Ted, Peter and Susan Alfond and I are all honored to be here for this tribute to our good friend, mentor and great coach Dick MacPherson. Coach Mac, I know how anxious you are to get up here and tell us all who you will be rooting for tonight – Maine or Syracuse.

But before we hear from the Coach, I want to make an announcement and share one of Harold Alfond's favorite stories about Mac which perfectly captures Mac's winning spirit and commitment to the success of his players.

The rivalry between Syracuse and Penn State in football is legendary. In 1987, under Coach Mac's leadership, the Orange reversed 16 straight years of losses to Penn State with a 48 to 21 drubbing of the Nittany Lions. The Orange went on to the Sugar Bowl and closed the year without losing a single game, tying 4<sup>th</sup> in the national polls. Next season, Mac knew what many people may not remember: that Penn State had virtually never lost to any team 2 seasons in a row. And so, in 1988, when Syracuse traveled to Penn State for the rematch at Beaver Stadium, Mac wanted his players to have every edge.

So the night before the 1988 Penn State game, in the quiet of his Happy Valley hotel room, Mac pulled out the phone book and looked up Catholic Churches. Mac would not miss Mass before this game. He spotted a listing for "Our Lady of Victory" church (which sounded perfect to him) and headed out to attend the 6:30 service.

He goes into the Church, sees there is no one there except the priest and takes a seat in the front pew. About half way through the Mass, Mac hears a cough. He turns around and sees he is not alone. There "lo and behold" is Joe Paterno, head coach of Penn State, on his knees 5 rows back, head bowed in earnest prayer. Not only is Paterno there in the same church, but what Mac doesn't know is this is JoePa's church – his kids were all baptized there, his son was married there, the Priest is his best friend. Of all the Churches and all the services to pick, Mac picked this one – Paterno's.

To be sure, Mac looks back one more time. This time, his eyes meet Paterno's eyes and Mac sees Paterno mouth: "Good luck tomorrow Mac."

When Mass is over, both coaches walk out down separate aisles but when they get to the vestibule at the back of the church, Mac sees Joe lean over and light a candle.

So ... Mac stops and lights a candle of his own.

Both coaches then ease their way out of the church. About half way down the church steps, Paterno now out of sight, Coach Mac turns around, goes back into the church. Facing the alter, he whispers, "Forgive me Father" and then turns around and blows out Joe's candle.

Well, the next day, Syracuse beat Penn State 24 to 10 and went on to close out another double-digit winning season for the first time in Syracuse's history.

Harold Alford adored Coach Mac. In Maine, Harold was Mac's number one promoter. For anyone who would listen, Harold extolled Mac's record and his qualities as a coach. For over a decade, Harold lobbied the National Football Foundation hoping they would see the greatness of Coach Mac the way we all have seen it for years. Well, Mac is now in the Hall of Fame and the first coach in the history of the State of Maine to receive this great honor. And Harold would have loved to be here this afternoon to share this tribute. And if Harold were here, he would not want this occasion to go unmarked with just talk. Harold Alford loved to say, "Don't tell me, show me."

So in Harold's tradition, and knowing that he is looking down on us this afternoon, we are pleased to announce that the Harold Alford Foundation will donate \$50,000 by matching every dollar contributed to the Richard MacPherson Coaching Fund. Helping football coaches and kids from Maine – Mac's home state, this fund will honor Coach Mac's legacy for years to come.

I know Harold would feel as we do. We can't wait to write a check for the Coach Mac Fund, and the bigger the better.

Much has been said about Mac's qualities as a football coach – all deserved. But Mac, you have been and are more than a great football coach. You are the ultimate life coach – an unforgettable touchstone of warmth, compassion and inspiration. Wherever you go with Coach Mac, he connects with everyone he meets: asking them about their favorite subject----themselves. To a perfect stranger, it is perfectly natural for Mac to strike up the most intimate of conversations. Mac will look a total stranger in the eye and boom out, "Now let me ask you, where were you born?" "Ohhh ... East Osh Kosh." "What a beautiful town; there are some great people there." "Do you know ...?" Soon a stranger is a friend forever, and once you are a friend of Mac, he becomes your coach. And at the heart of Mac's essence as a coach is this: What Mac wants to know about every young man he has coached and every person he has befriended is the answer to 3 questions: Who are they? Where are they going in life? And how can we get them there? Asking

and getting answers to these 3 questions is what makes a good coach a great coach – a coach for whom we would walk through brick walls and love the coach for asking us to do it.

Coach Mac, there is no one more deserving of the Hall of Fame induction we are here today to celebrate. There is no one more deserving of a fund for coaching education in the State of Maine than you. And Mac, despite the sin of blowing out Joe Paterno's candle on the eve of the 1988 Syracuse victory over Penn State ...,

God still loves you and so do we.