My dear friends:

As President of Club Lafayette, it is my duty, my honor, to welcome you to this celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Club Lafayette.

I feel humbled by the awesome duty which is mine, for to me it is given to reminisce....fifty years have come and gone, and during my term as president falls this signal occasion.

As Robert Burns said, "Oh, Lord, how sore unfit" am I to carry the full burden of this responsibility. Consider with me the presence here of seer and sage gentlemen who have known and loved this grand old club for far longer a term than mine....who have worked for her and served her long before I had arrived on the scene.

We have men here who welcomed new members, enjoyed their good fellowship, prayed for them when they were away at war, and who have stood lonely vigil when their old comrades have passed on.

These really are the men who are more qualified to reminisce about this club and about the men who have been the club.

What is Club Lafayette? Why was it founded, and why has it hung together and done so well? What bond has held its men together when other organizations as noble in purpose and more elaborate in design have withered? Surely it is not the boast of plush, the air of superiority, the chill of exclusiveness....for these things are not a part of our club, although they have been the main characteristics of other men's clubs.

I feel that Club Lafayette has been masterfully successful in retaining and preserving the nebulous, lambent, indefinable spark called fellowship. It cannot be demanded, nor described, nor written into rules. It springs, rather, from a warm and manly heart. It is felt in the firm grip, the quick smile, the hearty laugh.

This club has been a refuge from the tensions of life, a quiet corner when a man could rest, reflect, relax alone, or where he could unwind in the company of good fellows. One seems to leave his pack at the door. We have no room and no time and no interest in here for prestige, for airs, or for a hierarchy of important people. This is our heritage....this is our secret of success.

Wise were the men who a half century ago struck the tone which we delight to hear today. Had they builded the temple in different design, mayhap we would not be here together now.

Since olden times, men have gathered together in fraternal company, and good wives the world over realize this with loving tolerance. Yet we do not abuse this privilege. As Lord Byron so aptly put it, "Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter. Sermons and soda water the day after."
Did the founders plan this heritage? Did they think of those who followed them? I feel they must have, for we have inherited a rich dividend. Therefore, it is for us, as we stand in their places to think of those who follow us, and to hope that they will have a kind thought and a prayer for us when they meet fifty years hence.

We cannot enjoy the fruits of other people's work without replenishing the supply.

Bernard Shaw once said, "We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than we have to consume wealth which has been earned by another man."

Reminiscences deal with time, and we must be ever conscious of time. As Bonaparte told an aide, "Go, sir, and gallop! Don't forget that the entire world was made in six days. You can ask me for anything you like, except time."

Therefore as a schoolmaster, and as your president, let me chide you into a careful consideration of your stewardship as a Lafayette man. The founders and the older brothers reached for the branches and not the blossoms in their climb. Let us not become overwhelmed by the heady sweetness of their labors.

As we pause tonight at mid-century, let us think kindly of the legion of departed members who are watching us, the good men and true who marched through the years, passing on the good fellowship which brings us together. Let us say a silent prayer for them, and let us be humble in the presence of the thought of them. Let us be worthy of their trust.

Then let us honor not our club president, nor his officers and directors, nor our members, but rather those patrician elders who grace our table tonight, and all their predecessors. When we, in our time, take their places, with silvery mane, and cautious step, may our successors find us to be as worthy of the same love and honor and gratitude as we pay them tonight.

And when our names are finally inscribed in Necrology, may they say of us, "They were good men and true...they lived, laughed, and loved much...they were gentlemen...they were friends."

More than that need not be said of any man.

Paul H. Phaneuf
President - Club Lafayette
Golden Jubilee Celebration - May 19, 1963