

Allan D. Gilmour '52

Allan, you are truly a Renaissance man. You have made significant contributions to business, academia and the civil liberties of the gay community. You are recognized in your home state of Michigan as a civic-minded philanthropist and nationally as a whip-smart executive. In every post you've held — including vice chairman, university president and LGBT advocate — you have done the hard work to bring people together to further a common cause.

Since your earliest days, growing up on a dairy farm in rural Vermont, you've known the meaning and reward of a day's effort. You spent long hours with your father haying the family fields and tending the cows. It was during one hot summer on the farm that you dreamed of becoming a lawyer because, as you say, "for one, lawyers have inside work, not outside work. Number two, they wear good clothes. And lastly, they avoid all the things you might step in on a farm."

It's just that kind of wit and self-deprecating humor that draws people in and inspires admiration. Says one friend, "Allan has this unique knack of always having the right short quip for every occasion, and that puts people at ease."

Farming was in your DNA, but not in your future. You arrived at Exeter as an Upper in 1950 and struggled academically your first year. Through perseverance and "plain old hard work," you returned your senior year and excelled at a level that earned you entrance to Harvard, where you studied economics. University of Michigan Law School was next, fulfilling your childhood ambition to study law. But you found case studies dry and dull. You transferred to Ann Arbor's business school and attained your MBA in three semesters, staying on one more year as a teaching fellow and PhD candidate.

Recruited by the Big Three automakers, you chose the Ford Motor Company, partly because of the people you met there. You were fortunate to have a mentor at Ford who gave you, starting at the tender age of 26, a broad view of the inner workings of the company. Enthralled, you stayed with Ford for 34 years — holding positions from analyst to CFO and, ultimately, vice chairman. You retired in 1995 having reached second in command.

Where others may have slowed their pace, your retirement is marked by service. You dove immediately into a new position as chairman of the Henry Ford Health System, an academic medical center, and took on corporate governance roles at half a dozen Fortune 500 companies.

This was a pivotal time for you on a personal level. You publicly acknowledged your relationship with your partner, Eric Jirgens. Coming out as an openly gay corporate executive made national news. It was a courageous public statement for the 1990s — a time of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the AIDS epidemic, and commonplace discrimination and harassment of gay people. You turned the attention into an opportunity, sharing your personal life with the world and paving the way for others to follow.

In the ensuing months and years, you gave dozens of lectures at academic institutions and corporations espousing inclusion in the workplace. You advocated for nondiscrimination policies and domestic-partner benefits before the Michigan House of Representatives, and founded the HOPE Fund, a technical-assistance program that strengthens organizations that serve the LGBT community. Your philanthropic passions, which reveal a broad and compassionate worldview, led you to help fund a new community center in Detroit where people of all cultures, sexual orientations and gender identities can find support and unconditional acceptance.

As Detroit's go-to guy, it's not surprising that your retirement was cut short. First, in 2002, came the call from Bill Ford Jr. You returned to the automaker, once again, as vice chairman and CFO and found the company's culture had evolved. It had adopted a formal nondiscrimination policy, largely due to the awareness you helped raise.

Shortly thereafter, Wayne State University approached you to step in as interim president. The board tapped you, a friend says, "because they knew Allan could take care of the place, make some hard decisions." Indeed, you increased student retention, boosted graduation rates, and helped raise more than \$212 million for the university's capital campaign.

You rose to yet another challenge in 2014, taking a leadership role with the Foundation for Detroit's Future, formed to help restructure the city's debt and bring it out of bankruptcy. There, advancing conversation and challenging convention, you made a longstanding investment in the sustainability, prosperity and diversity of your community.

Allan, you once said, "We older people look back and think of the progress that's been made. The young ones look ahead and see what needs to be done. And both are right." Your life has borne out this truth. For sparking cultural and corporate progress, for supporting and inspiring those who will follow, and for reaffirming the values of goodness and knowledge that Exeter's founder sought to promote, we present to you today the 2018 John Phillips Award.