

Transcript of Personal Remarks on Deirdre N. McCloskey

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"Most of you know that Deirdre was hired by Milton Friedman, at the University of Chicago, for her first job as a professor after graduate school. Friedman is most famous for saying "There is no such thing as a free lunch," by which he means there is a price and cost for every action. I beg to differ, but not for the reasons the economic historians in the room know to be true. [audience laughter] You see, when I did the PhD at Iowa one needed only 3 (three) signatures to get the PhD thesis and thus diploma approved by faculty. . . . But as I told Deirdre back then at the time, I had Donald McCloskey, Deirdre McCloskey, and I only needed one more, . . . [audience laughing, Deirdre included] So that was free for me, very economical [audience cracking up some more].

I took a gamble back in 1991, a gamble that proved to be more than statistically significant. [More laughter]. I moved my little family, including two children under the age of five, from Indiana to Iowa to study with a person I admired in books and articles but had never met in person nor even spoken to. It was not an easy decision, and not everyone thought it sounded like a great idea. [laughter]. Don had many qualities one could admire, even love. But not like Deirdre, who has many more. [aww shucks sound in the audience, including from Deirdre].

We've done 3 books together so far, and 18 articles, Deirdre [oohs and ahs]. And we took a lot of sh*t from our colleagues because of our views, a lot of sh*t. [laughter] But we stuck together and to our guns and now our view is starting to prevail, including in the Supreme Court. [sighs of excitement] We are proud of many things, including our now classic article, "The Standard Error of Regressions" [affirmation by Deirdre and head nods up and down too all around room]. Thank you for that. We've done well. I want to tell you two little stories, they're both short but telling.

First, I'd like to tell you about the author of Bourgeois Virtues [hearty laughter all around]. A few years ago Deirdre and I drove from Chicago to Decatur down state to attend a conference honoring the 25th year of her book The Rhetoric of Economics, at Milliken

University. The conference was organized by Paul Turpin, and others in the audience, including me and Benny and Deirdre, were also in attendance. Anyway, I was a bit slow getting the car on the road [laughter] and we were hungry so I recommended a stop in Joliet for jerk chicken. [more laughter]. We arrived late, rather late, as I recall --- and again I am very sorry Paul! [cracking up all around] Well, Deirdre was just starting to write volume one of *Bourgeois Virtues*, and the first lecture--the keynote address of the conference---was to be her speech describing to us the nature and meaning of bourgeois virtues to economic science and policy. The session was held in Milliken's chapel, and the speaker, Deirdre, stood in front of the altar, where the speaker's podium was located. It was a hot summer night and she was barefoot, her toes painted red [laughter including from Deirdre].

Now most of you know Willie, Will Shakespeare, that is, Deirdre's dog [laughter]. Willie was the third guest in the car during the road trip, and he came to Deirdre's big speech of course [laughter]. Well, Willie was not yet trained, and was rather scrappy shall we say, biting things and people, dragging around books and flip flops [laughter] that sort of thing. [more laughter]

Anyway, Deirdre had this idea that shooting a water pistol at Willie would solve the dog problem [laughter]. Deirdre started lecturing, "As Saint Augustine said in the *City of God* . . . then . . . Willie! Willie! Get off the Chair! Boom! Boom Boom! [making the sound of a gun, I was I mean, not Deirdre; she was firing the gun] [laughter] The cross was behind her you see; Jesus was not on it, it was a different kind of church [laughter] but we sensed his presence [laughter] and then "Well, economists are fixated on one character Max U [that is maximum utility], a nice Jewish Vietnamese man who is a charming character, for sure, but narrow.

She was getting us to think about the three theological virtues, you see: faith, hope, and charity, and the four cardinal virtues, justice, courage, temperance and fortitude and then. . . Willie! Willie! Put that down Willie! Boom! Boom Boom Boom! [audience and Deirdre cracking up].

There's one other little story I'd like to share, which I think only one of you knows. I first learned about Don's arrest in Iowa from my son, who, though only 8 years old, had read the *Iowa Press Citizen* and saw an article about the arrest. Later that night, though the lights were out and he was in bed, I heard some noise coming from him and looked through the door to check. He was singing, ... and the economic historians and music fans and friends of Deirdre will get this reference, and Santhi, Paul, Deirdre and I remember my children being at the conference parties and weekly seminars . . . "Peas, peas, peas peas eatin' goober peas" [in low bass voice, I'm singing, imitating my son imitating Don] followed by "Peas, peas, peas, peas, eatin' goober peas" [in high alto or soprano, again, in imitation]. Peas, peas, peas, peas . . . Son, I said, are you okay? Yes, I'm fine. What are you doing? I gently asked him. I'm trying to see what Don is going to sound like when he becomes Deirdre" [laughter and applause]

- Stephen T. Ziliak, March 21st 2015

