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On Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001, President David Adamany, Dean Concetta Stewart, the Board of Trustees as well as the faculty and staff of the School of Communications and Theater gathered in Shusterman Hall at the dedication ceremony for the Joe First Media Center.

The Joe First Media Center will be a communications and media hub in the School of Communications and Theater and was made possible by a \$1.5 million gift from H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest, President and CEO of The Lenfest Group, and by the Annenberg Foundation.

"This is an important moment for our school. It's the first big construction project in 30 years," Dean Concetta Stewart said. In her opening remarks, Stewart thanked Gerry and Marguerite Lenfest for their generous financial gift as well as Walter and Lenore Annenberg who were represented at the ceremony by Dr. Gail Levin, the executive director of the Annenberg Foundation. "This media center means so much to a school that graduates more students [than any other discipline]," Stewart said.

Likewise, Rebecca Winkler, a Journalism, Public Relations & Advertising student in the class of 2002, took the podium and noted that she is looking forward to the impact that the new media center will have on the School of Communications and Theater, citing the influential role it will have a social gathering place where students can network. "Not only will the center represent networking in the communications industry as well as community, but it will also be a fun, energetic and open atmosphere for all students to enjoy," Winkler said.

Lew Klein, an adjunct professor to the School of Communications and Theater and the Vice President of the National Association of Television Program Executives

Educational Foundation, introduced his long-time friend, Gerry Lenfest. He spoke about how Gerry and his wife Marguerite began Lenfest Communications in 1974, with the corporate headquarters in their own home. "The corporate filing cabinets were in the basement, Marguerite was the bookkeeper and handled all the correspondences," Klein said.

"In the short years since 1974 Lenfest Communications built this region's largest cable system and became a national leader in the booming cable industry – a field that many doubted would ever succeed," Klein said.

In regards to Lenfest's character, Klein was sentimental in his praise of his friend. "Gerry is a gentle man. He listens to everyone. He is comfortable with everyone and everyone is comfortable with him," Klein said. "He is kind and he never forgives or forgets kindnesses that are shown to him."

Klein recounted the discussion he had with Lenfest when he initially decided to leave his generous financial gift to leave to the School of Communications and Theater. "Gerry kept asking 'Will this gift make a difference?'" Klein said. Addressing his longtime friend in the audience, Klein answered this question as he had earlier. "Yes, Gerry, this gift *will* make a difference – a difference in the lives of countless individuals who will benefit from your generous contribution. From all of us, from all of them, I say thank you...you *have* made a difference," Klein said as applause filled the room.

Lenfest was presented with an honorary plaque and took the podium to speak of his friend and mentor Joe First. "[Joe] was a man of great integrity...I don't think I would have gone off on my own in the cable industry without having the heritage of [knowing] Joe First," Lenfest said. "He is a man I deeply love. It is really an honor for me to be here today...to recognize my feeling and obligation to that wonderful man. I thank you all for this opportunity," Lenfest said. First's widow, Helen, looked on as Lenfest lauded her late husband.

Joe First built a distinguished career as a prominent communications executive, attorney and civic leader. First was a Temple University trustee, a member of the Board's Executive Committee and chairman of its Educational Policies Committee. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws at Temple in 1980.

First worked closely with Walter Annenberg to make Triangle Publications the leading privately owned communications company of its time in the United States. He was revered both professionally and personally as a man of the highest ethics and standards. First served as vice president and general counsel at Triangle until his retirement in 1975, when he continued to serve as legal consultant to the company.

Helen First addressed the audience on behalf of her late husband. The tiny nonagenarian gave an impassioned, poetic speech, instantly engaging the crowd with her dynamic way of speaking. "Joe gave everyone an even break - one that was always recognized and appreciated," First said. "He could connect with people and he could connect people with themselves."

First reflected on the literal and symbolic ways in which the Joe First Media Center will play a connective role in the School of Communications and Theater. "These joined buildings will forever be the symbolic body of Temple. Its Statue of Liberty, its Liberty Bell...proclaiming the maxim, communication is more powerful than power itself when it achieves connection," First said with fervor.

"Sixty five years ago I was driving my two year old first born daughter past a building that caught her attention - a two story apartment house built in the shape of a recumbent letter U...'Look mommy, mommy look,' she shouted, 'houses holding hands!'" First recounted. "Houses holding hands - that is the ultimate meaning of this symbol of Temple University," First said.

Looking toward the heavens, First continued with a lump in her throat and a tear in her eye. "Look, Joe dear - houses holding hands," First said. "Let your spirit

hover over this symbolic structure...by whatever wireless vibration you can employ,  
bless this symbol of Temple University and all who enter the portal of these houses  
holding hands.”