

**Bassam Shakhashiri's remarks at the
PBS Wisconsin Supporter Appreciation Event**

6:00 pm, Thursday, May 15, 2025

Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center

Madison, Wisconsin

I rise, this evening, to thank you for your engagement with, and commitment to, PBS Wisconsin.

You have enabled great programming to reach people in Wisconsin and elsewhere around the world.

You have expressed confidence in the value of connecting people: to learn, to enjoy, and to contribute to the common good of society.

Wisconsin Public Media are critical to living the Wisconsin Idea. To living the Wisconsin idea in the 21st Century.

I am proud to be involved with Wisconsin Public Television and with Wisconsin Public Radio.

It all started in 1972 when WHA-TV began telecasting my science program, ONCE UPON A

CHRISTMAS CHEERY IN THE LAB OF SHAKHASHIRI.

Credit for starting the telecasts goes mostly to: Ron Bornstein, who was the director of communications at the University.

Yes, Ron Bornstein, who pioneered and guided so many innovations in public broadcasting in Wisconsin and much more so with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and with National Public Radio.

Ron Bornstein lived the Wisconsin Idea.

For the past 50 plus years, I have enjoyed and benefited from meaningful collaboration with PBS Wisconsin and with Wisconsin Public Radio.

I want to express admiration and gratitude to so many. There are dozens of them.

From PBS Wisconsin, I single out: Deb Piper.

Deb Piper directed my program for decades. She made me look good on TV! Thank you, Deb.

From WPR, I single out Larry Meiller.

Larry hosted me on his program for nearly four decades. His understanding and his style always put me and put the listening audience at ease... and wanting to stay tuned. Thank you, Larry.

From the School of Music, Marc Fink.

Marc Fink connected me with young artists and with world class artists:

Faculty and students from the School of Music, the Madison Youth Choirs, the Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra, the Pro Arte Quartet, AND with a big-time noise maker!

This person reminds me of what Sir Thomas Beechem once said:

“They don’t understand the music, but they like the noise it makes.”

You all know who I am talking about: Mike Leckrone!

Mike and his musicians joined me at the Christmas Lecture, at the Memorial Union Terrace, at the Kohl Center, and so many other occasions. Thank you, Mike!

And of course, there was always Bucky Badger. A very good student enrolled in my class.

Bucky always showed off the goggles he put on when doing experiments! Yes, safety is paramount.

Bucky was in my class every year! How could that be? Didn't he graduate? He had to graduate sometime!

And then I realized.

In my class there were children and then grandchildren of students who had completed my course earlier.





I close by saluting Jon Miskowski.

We all thank you, Jon, both for your leadership and for your management style.

Those of us who go to hockey games hear the announcer say when the players penalized exit the penalty box:

“Both teams are at full strength!”

And the crowd says out loud: “that’s debatable!”

Jon Miskowski, there is nothing debatable about your effectiveness AND the value of what you do.

Wisconsin Public Media must survive.

Thank you, Jon.

The survival of quality societal institutions, including Wisconsin Public Media, is at stake now.

Let us all provide strong support to serve the common good of humanity and to protect our planet.

Thank you.

PBS Wisconsin's scientific partnership with the University continues – with an upcoming collaboration called “Field Notes on Climate” with the UW-Madison Center for Climatic Research. Ami Eckard-Lee, one of the hosts, is here tonight to tell us a little more!