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Bob Chamberlain Memorial, delivered at the Louis Armstrong Theatre on January 29, 1982

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Bob Chamberlain was respected and liked. He was the kind of person who was always interesting. That was true because he was a genuinely educated person. He knew so much that was interesting and important, and through vocabulary, his manner of speech and personality he communicated, I liked being with him. Everyone did.

Bob had definite opinions, high standards of taste. I think he knew rather well what he liked and disliked. Yet, though he held to his views, it did not appear to me that he acquired enemies. Nor did he need them as some do. He seemed to create an environment around himself made up of what he enjoyed and held to be valuable. In doing so he dealt with disagreement, but did not dwell on it.

His pleasure, even joy in good books, drama, music and the language itself always had a freshness about it. There was no pretense about him. He was the real article. There appeared to be little separation between professional and personal life, between scholarship and pleasure. He enjoyed what he did, and most often did what he enjoyed.

Can you think of many people among those you know who selected a profession better suited to personal taste, talent, and temperament
than did Bob Chamberlain? I can’t. That was one of the most fortunate aspects of his life as it is for anyone who chooses wisely.

Those of you who lived more closely to him than I did can speak with greater knowledge than I of his sensitivity. His antennae picked up feelings. To sensitive people like Bob, loving, caring, beauty, pain, hurt are felt so much more strongly, but they were generally understood better by him as well. They affected his life, and through appreciation and balance he assimilated them. He took the good and bad, and in perspective we can say he did as well as anyone with both in his life.

In the last five or six conversations I had with him we covered, as usual, a number of topics -- literature, music, travel, politics, campus politics, teaching, hopes for the department, and always children. Conversations about one’s children are often like the weather. If you can’t think of anything else to discuss, ask about “the children.” This was not so with Bob. There was nothing mundane nor superficially sentimental about our discourse on the topic. In it rather was reflected the best of what can be found in pride, caring,
concern, commitment and mutually fulfilled need. I don’t know his children well so my comment cannot be complete. I did see in Bob the ability to be human in the most reassuring way. He loved them well, and that’s what being human is about.

The last time I visited with Bob he was in the hospital. There he was in a typical room surrounding himself with books, plants, some art objects, personal momentos, and talking with his son Tony on the telephone. There he was taking a rather sterile environment and adding beauty, interest, familiarity, care, and personality to it. That is the way it always was with him.
MR. CHAMBERLAIN *

Under all the unlit street lamps of the world, 
sit men like Mr. Chamberlain, 
thin, smiling from dusty blue eyes. 
If a man like a glow ever existed, it was, 
and is (since he's now someplace under an 
unlit street lamp) Chamberlain. 
He appears from printed pages to which 
he gave significance, and you think 
of people like Chamberlain when you 
light candles in the daytime 
in order that the mind may see. He stood, 
I remember, speaking of simple involved 
things, unraveling light-years 
of twisted meanings. It's a road 
Chamberlain lighted, the first block, the start, 
and then, but not oddly, 
the whole crooked mile isn't dark anymore.

*Poem written by Josephine Aichner, 
former student of Professor Chamberlain, 
and published in the Syracuse University 
Alumni News.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG THEATRE

Jan. 29, 1982
A TRIBUTE TO
ROBERT LYALL CHAMBERLAIN
1923-1982

Opening for the Colleges .......... Arend D. Lubbers
for the Department of English .......... Loretta Wasserman

(Violin)
Kadish (to be announced)

Selection from "The Future of the Humanities" Robert L. Chamberlain
"Der Lindenbaum"
Text by W. Muller Schubert
"The New Ghost"
Text by F. Shove Vaughan-Williams
Selection from The Mad Woman of Chaillot Jean Giraudoux
"Tristesse" Alfred de Musset
"Wohin"
Text by W. Muller Schubert
"Clune"
from the cycle "On Wenloc Edge"
Text by A.E. Housman Vaughan-Williams
"The Birds"
Text by Belloc Warlock
Selections from The Four Quartets T.S. Eliot

"Et Misericordiae" from "Magnificat" Bach
"Corinna's Going A-Maying" (Audiotape of Prof. Chamberlain reading for the "Voice and Verse" series broadcast over WSRX.) Robert Herrick

THE PROGRAM WILL END WITH A MINUTE OF SILENT PRAYER.

Violinist: Yosef Yankelev (New World Quartet)
Mezzo-Soprano: Leslie Eitzen
Tenor: William Beidler
Pianist: Eric Ziolec
Readers: Loretta Wasserman
Anthony Parise
Laura Salazar
Pierre Robert
David Huisman
Grandir est sans limites.