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Memorial Speech for Bob Lubbers, delivered in April 2005

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Bob Lubbers Memorial Service

I come to this service for my brother with so many memories, the most vivid and happiest dating to the time of his youth and my childhood. I come with sadness because so much accomplishment and the pleasure found in personal relationships were withheld from him through no fault of his own, but they were not entirely withheld. I come with a sense of peace, stronger than I had expected, because he is free of a burden most difficult to bear, and finally peace envelops him.

His burden did not include the suffering of the unloved for I cannot imagine more love from a mother, whose capacity for caring and nurture were

unsurpassed and a father who was ready to sacrifice everything for his welfare and even hopeful that his life would improve. He was highly intelligent, artistic in a disciplined way, he excelled as a competitive swimmer, and his intellect encompassed the interests of the liberally educated. He was sensitive and he had the capacity for fun. His unfortunate condition eventually robbed him of the fruits of these qualities, but the life of his youth and early adulthood revealed them fully.

If one measures a life by the positive effect it has on others I can testify to his profound influence on mine. He was ^{NEARLY}~~merely~~ seven years older and in retrospect there was no evidence that he ever

resented the intrusion of an infant after seven years claiming total attention of our parents. Nor did the difference in age keep him from engaging me in his activities and thoughts. He was a nurturer to his younger brother. He filled my childhood with accounts of George Washington, the Kings^{of} ^{↓ QUEENS} England and France, the times of knights and tournaments, the Spanish Armada, and Lord Nelson at Trafalgar. Sometimes we acted out the events of history in pageants that he produced. He also arranged games of Capture the Flag, kick the can and cops and robbers that spread throughout the block where we lived and cost our neighbors tomato plants and stalks of corn. He coached a football team comprised of my friends and me. In our first

game against a physically bigger group of sixth graders, we being in the fifth grad, my left hand was crushed ending forever my football career, but not my love for the game, a love we shared. He would gather a few of us together at night, late if we could avoid mom's watchful eye, and tell us ghost stories. Whenever I had a series of nightmares mom would know that Bob had been telling them again.

When I was being shunned by a few boys, as boys often do to one another my older brother came to my rescue. He, another friend of mine and I lured them into our family car on the pretense that we were going to buy them ice cream cones. Bribery could win back friendship. Instead we headed for the local

cemetery, drove to its furthest reaches and forced them out. Our ages were impressionable, the night was dark and I remember them taking off like bullets for the entrance reaching it about the same time we did in the car. They had a long walk home. Bob was my friend and advocate. By the time he left for Yale and then the Navy he was my hero.

When I reflect on our relationship I see that his time with me and the activities he planned for my friends and me generated an interest in heroes and heroines of the past and led me into history as a profession, an excellent preparation for what I ultimately did.

He was the commissary officer on a small ship that was towed across the pacific from New Caledonia to Seattle at the end of the war. The speed was about five knots. The distance more than 7,000 miles. He had to see that the ship was well stocked for a long and tedious voyage.

He told this story on himself. He liked donuts so he ordered a huge number, what he thought would be 200 dozen or 2,400 donuts, when the delivery came there were so many boxes of donuts they had to store some of them on the outside decks. The ships overflowed in donuts. Two hundred gross were delivered or 28,800 donuts. His shipmates didn't let him forget it. They spent hours catapulting donuts

into the air and firing at them with various weapons in the great donut target practice tournament. He ate as many as he could, but along with his shipmates he became sick of donuts after a month at sea. It takes a long time to eat 28,800 donuts.

Earlier I said not all of life's satisfactions were withheld from him. Even as he struggled with a flawed mentality he could for many years reflect with interest and affection on the lives of his sons and daughter. He knew that he was unable to meet the responsibilities expected of a father; ^{HE} was able however to appreciate that Jean and John found each other and that John assumed responsibilities he could not. He talked with me often about the latest

news from Rob, Rich and Peggy. I remember his pleasure in Rob's marriage to Lucy, in his satisfaction that Rich shared his professional interest, and that Peggy achieved so well in her academic pursuits. At the times when he had the light of reasonable consciousness he appreciated most his children's intelligence. Perhaps he understood that he contributed to that. He was also relieved that they were not afflicted as he was.

He lived a long time with the yoke of mental illness, but before it was fastened on him he showed so many traits and qualities that contribute to the enhancement of life. I know how smart he was, and that still gives me satisfaction. I know how talented

he was, and I am so pleased we have on our walls evidence of that talent. I know how sensitive and helpful he could be, and I see evidence of those qualities passed on to the next generation along with the intelligence. As I reflect I realize I benefited directly from his good qualities with the least disruption. His greatest influence on my life came at a time when he was well and energetic, and we were close. There is much in him for me to love. Those loveable and admirable qualities were always a part of who he was. They could not come to full fruition because of the mental torment that inflicted him, in early adulthood, but at the core he had a generous even gentle soul.