

R.M. LUMIANSKY

SCHOLAR, TEACHER, SPOKESMAN FOR
THE HUMANITIES



American Council of Learned Societies

ACLS OCCASIONAL PAPER, No.3

R.M. Lumiansky 1913-1987

The death of R.M. Lumiansky on April 2, 1987 saddened all who knew him. Charles Blitzer, Director of the National Humanities Center, prepared a Memorial, which was read at the ACLS Annual Meeting on April 23, 1987.

A Memorial Service was held at the New York Public Library on September 21, 1987. The speakers on that occasion were

*Vartan Gregorian
New York Public Library*

*Joel Conarroe
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation*

*Robert Raymo
New York University*

*Elizabeth Pochoda
"The Nation"*

*John E. Sawyer
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*

*Georges May
Yale University*

*Stanley N. Katz
American Council of Learned Societies.*

The text of each of these tributes follows.

In Memoriam R.M. Lumiansky

April 23, 1987

Charles Blitzer
National Humanities Center

It is a great honor for me to have been invited to pay tribute here to the man who did more than anyone else in our time to advance the cause of the humanities in the United States.

I must add that this honor carries with it a special challenge: How does one, on such an occasion, pay tribute to a man whose impatience with ceremony, with verbosity and with public displays of affection and admiration—particularly when he was their object—has become almost legendary? I spoke with Janet Lumiansky yesterday and her advice confirmed my own instinct: be brief, be straightforward, and stick to the facts. This is what I shall attempt to do. If sentiment or grandiloquence should threaten to intrude, I shall summon up my indelible memories of Bob grimacing, fidgeting, and in extreme cases ostentatiously examining his airplane ticket when meetings and speeches wore on beyond his endurance. I hope these memories will serve to keep my remarks within limits that even he would have found tolerable.

Robert Mayer Lumiansky was born in Darlington, South Carolina in 1913 and was educated in the Darlington public schools. Three months before his 16th birthday he entered The Citadel, from which he graduated in 1933 with a B.A. and a commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Army.

Bob's first professional employment was as a teacher of English at Walhalla High School in a small town (population today less than 4,000) in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of South Carolina. He taught at Walhalla High School from 1934 to 1938, while also earning an M.A. from the University of South Carolina. In 1938 he moved to Chapel Hill, where he was an instructor at the University of North Carolina and received his Ph.D. in English in 1942.

The only break in 50 otherwise uninterrupted years of teaching came with World War II, during which he served in France, attaining the rank of major and winning both the Bronze Star and the Croix de Guerre.

It is not my purpose nor, I believe, my assignment here to provide a detailed chronological account of Bob Lumiansky's long and distinguished career as a teacher, a scholar, and an academic administrator. The facts are all amply recorded in the appropriate reference books. I will simply summarize them by saying that, after serving the usual academic apprenticeship at Tulane, he was a professor of English at that university, at Duke University, at the University of Pennsylvania and at New York University. At Tulane he became Dean of the Graduate School and Provost. He was Chairman of the English Departments at Duke and Pennsylvania, and at the latter was named Avalon Foundation Professor of the Humanities. Outside the university world, but still squarely within the world of the humanities, he served for 18 years as a Senator of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, an unprecedented 15 years as a member of its Executive Committee, and ultimately became its President; he was a Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America and served also as its President; and he was an original member of the Board of Trustees of the National Humanities Center, on which he remained until his death. Most important of all, not simply for this audience but also for the world of learning, he was elected Chairman of the American Council of Learned Societies in 1959 and, upon the retirement of Fred Burkhardt in 1974, became its President. He was President of the ACLS until 1982, and in 1985 returned for a year as President *pro tempore*.

Throughout this entire period, just as he continued to teach, so too Bob remained an active and productive scholar. He published important critical studies of Chaucer and Malory, translations into modern English of the *Canterbury Tales* and of *Troilus and Criseyda*, and a magisterial two volume critical edition of *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, which was completed just two years ago. At the time of his death he was engaged in the preparation of a comparable critical edition of Malory.

These and other accomplishments that I have omitted for the sake of brevity were appropriately recognized by the academic world. Eight universities awarded him honorary degrees and he was a recipient of the Phi Beta Kappa Award for Distinguished Service to the Humanities. He was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a member of the American Philosophical Society, and a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

In what time remains, and I sense that it should be brief, I shall speak of Bob's two most enduring achievements, the ones that constitute his chief legacy to the world of humanistic learning, and the ones from which he derived the greatest satisfaction.

The first was his role in the establishment of the National Endowment for the Humanities. By 1962, Bob had become convinced that the time was ripe for the creation of what we then referred to as a National Humanities Foundation. In the face of inertia, skepticism, and some outright opposition, he set to work in his characteristically determined fashion. It was, appropriately, in a hotel room in Washington at the end of an ACLS annual meeting that he gathered a few friends and colleagues—along with an ample supply of bourbon and ice—to draw up his plan of battle. Although there was discussion and even consultation, the decisions were essentially Bob's: the ACLS would appoint a National Commission on the Humanities; Phi Beta Kappa and the Council of Graduate Schools would be invited to be co-sponsors; Barnaby Keeney would be asked to chair the Commission and Herman Wells to be its vice-chairman; and as a junior member of the ACLS staff, I would be named the Commission's staff director—a somewhat grandiose title, since in fact it had no staff to direct. In short order all this was done and early in 1963 the Commission began its deliberations.

With a tiny budget, a large, extremely distinguished membership, and a considerable range of views about its mission, the Commission often seemed on the verge of losing its way or even of falling apart. One member resigned and others threatened to, some persisted in questioning the whole enterprise, and nearly everyone had his own ideas about the form of the Report and the substance of its recommendations. Two things saved the day: the cooperation of the constituent societies of the ACLS, which provided the substance of the final Report, and the driving force of Bob Lumiansky, who never for a moment lost sight of his original objective.

By persistence, by diplomacy, and by the sheer power of his ideas and his presence, he saw to it that the Report was completed and published in the spring of 1964. Its single concrete recommendation was that a national humanities foundation should be established.

The level of our collective political sophistication in those days can perhaps best be suggested by recalling that once the Report had been

published we had no clear idea of what to do with it. Having sent copies to all the usual suspects in the academic and foundation worlds, we discovered that we had a considerable number left and decided to mail one to each of the 535 members of Congress. To our great delight one actually responded, Congressman William Moorhead of Pennsylvania, our unsung hero who was to introduce the first legislation based upon the Report. In the course of the ensuing months, using every resource that Bob and Barnaby Keeney and Fred Burkhardt could muster, we had gained the attention and even the interest of the Johnson White House and of such influential figures on the Hill as Senators Javits and Pell and Congressmen Brademas and Thompson. The rest, as they say, is history. In the spring of 1965, joint hearings were held in Congress, in the summer a bill was reported out, and in September Lyndon Johnson signed S. 1483, "An Act to provide for the establishment of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, to promote progress and scholarship in the humanities and the arts in the United States, and for other purposes."

In the course of our on-the-job training in the legislative process we learned—or perhaps Bob Lumiansky already knew—one of the great rules of life in this city [Washington, D.C.]: don't worry about who gets the credit so long as you get what you want. It is said that success has many fathers, and accounts of the creation of the NEH surely confirm this cynical observation. As one who was privileged to be present at the creation, I can attest to the crucial, or to continue the metaphor, seminal role played by Bob Lumiansky.

Apart from their intended result, Bob's efforts had another unintended and unanticipated result: more than ever before in its history, the ACLS had come to be recognized as the legitimate national spokesman for the humanities in the United States. Bob was appointed a member of the first Council of the NEH, and as a member of President Reagan's 1981 Task Force on the Arts and the Humanities he helped to resist calls for the abolition of the NEH; he and his successors have continued to be consulted by successive administrations, successive NEH chairmen, and concerned members of Congress.

All of this was an enormous help to Bob in achieving his second great objective, the financial security of the ACLS itself. Much as he enjoyed and cared about the substantive activities of this great scholarly federation—ranging in time and space from the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* to the international exchange of scholars—for as long as he re-

mained at the ACLS as Chairman, as President, and even as President *pro tempore*, funding was his great preoccupation. And once again, through unswerving effort and inexhaustable energy, he achieved his goal: a permanent endowment sufficient to support the basic operations and core programs of the ACLS, affording his successors at least the relative luxury of having to seek funds only for specific projects and new initiatives.

To complete this story, it should be recalled that in recent years Bob spoke and wrote increasingly of what he called “a national establishment to support the humanities.” This he saw as a tripartite structure consisting of the ACLS, the NEH, and the National Humanities Center. In his typical manner, but alas with too little time remaining to him, he set to work to help the Center secure an adequate endowment for *its* core program. In addition to his constant encouragement, his wise counsel and his heroic labors on our behalf, what I shall always appreciate most was his repeated insistence that the Center and the ACLS were not competitors but rather collaborators in a single great enterprise. This generosity of spirit and breadth of vision, this unflinching willingness to pitch in when any part of that enterprise needed his help, were among Bob’s constant and unvarying qualities.

Indeed, what strikes me most forcefully now when I think of Bob is the fact that he seemed never to change in any fundamental respect through all the years I knew him. Even when he had become the elder statesman of the humanities in America, he remained still the simple, steady, self-effacing, practical and intensely private man I had first met a quarter of a century earlier. I am sure it never occurred to him that it was in any way incongruous or beneath his dignity to walk around a city block in New York or Washington three or four times, carrying his indestructible black briefcase, in order to arrive precisely on time for an appointment with a foundation executive or an official of the NEH. To him, this was simply part of his job, as it was also part of his sense of courtesy and propriety. Despite his occasional gruffness and his habitual impatience, he was a true gentleman, a man of utter integrity and a loyal friend. It was always a comfort to know that when we needed him he would unflinchingly be there. It is painful to acknowledge that Bob *is* no longer there, but heartening to realize that countless scholars and students—most of whom will probably never have heard his name—will be the lasting beneficiaries of his tireless work on behalf of the humanities.

September 21, 1987

Vartan Gregorian
New York Public Library

It is most fitting that we have today's memorial service for R.M. Lumiansky here at the New York Public Library for he was a scholar, a teacher, and he embodied the quintessential qualities of scholarship namely integrity, hard work, and great pride. I am honored to welcome you as the President of the New York Public Library but also as a former colleague of Bob Lumiansky in my capacities as former Dean of the faculty of arts and sciences and Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, an institution to which he contributed so much. I am honored and privileged also to count myself among friends of Bob Lumiansky. A man of few words—he would have told us today if he were here, "Cut it short." A man of action. A scholar. A believer in and builder of the humanities. A man who gave solidarity, scholarship, and generosity a good name. I miss him. We all miss him.

Joel Conarroe
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation

The word integrity is portrayed in a Chinese ideogram by the image of a man standing beside his word. I am quite certain that the man has curly hair, steel-rimmed glasses, and a pronounced South Carolina accent. Integrity is a word that invariably comes to mind when one thinks of R.M. Lumiansky. And there are others as well, adjectives like substantial, consistent, self-effacing; nouns like scholar, statesman, and, of course, friend.

Bob was a close friend for more than twenty years; I loved him very much. During all that time, whenever I needed wise counsel, he was the one I turned to, and his forthright advice was always on target. Numerous memories are indelibly etched in my mind. We had adjoining offices at the University of Pennsylvania when he was department head and I was his undergraduate chairman. Many days at precisely noon he would poke his head through the door and say "Joel, you lunching?" We never went to Le Bec Fin or any other elegant spot, but always to the Freshmen Commons, for a sandwich and coffee. The conversation was always more varied and nourishing than the fare. Plain living and high thinking was Bob's philosophy.

On a few occasions he would say "Joel, we got troubles," and I knew that the hotter things got the cooler Bob would get. We were visited once by a group of seniors who insisted that having a comprehensive exam as a graduation requirement was immoral. I remember not only how Bob calmly persuaded them otherwise, but how amused he was by the charge of immorality. I have known few people who took as much delight in the entertaining drama of ordinary daily life—like his beloved Chaucer, Bob had a robust sensibility, and an appreciation of what is incongruous, or ribald, or pretentious, or simply impressive. The first time I visited the Lumianskys at home, Janet met me at the door and from the other room, where Bob was watching a football game, we heard "Look at that citizen run!" He had a colorful way of expressing himself, the product, no doubt, of his southern background. He was, in fact, a veritable anthology of picturesque phrases. If a speaker got on a high horse or went

on too long—and to Bob a little more than a little was by far much too much—he would lean over and say “The wind blew and the boloney flew.”

Bob’s impatience, of course, like his punctuality, is legendary. Heaven help the new assistant professor who arrived at 11:02 for a meeting scheduled to begin at 11:00. The meeting began at 11:00. And heaven help the speaker who went on past his allotted time if Bob was up on the platform. His fidgeting and squirming represented an early form of what was later to be called break dancing. Yet he could also be patience personified, as during those endless flowery toasts offered at official dinners in Moscow. Bob’s reciprocal toasts were neither long nor flowery, and yet that didn’t matter a whit to the Russians, who, like virtually everyone else who got to know him at all well, admired Bob exorbitantly. Because of his sense of fun and his attentive interest in people and quite ordinary things he was, as I know that Allen Kassof, Wesley Fisher, and Dan Matuszewski could testify, a marvelous travelling companion. And how he loved to tell stories on these three citizens, and to talk about the hilarious uncertainties of travel in the Soviet Union.

I suspect that everybody here has some sense of Bob’s immense contribution to Tulane, and Duke, and Penn, to the ACLS, the NEH, NYU, MLA, Phi Beta Kappa, the Medieval Academy of America, the National Humanities Center, the Council of Graduate Schools, and the other institutions that were beneficiaries of his incomparable administrative skills. Nor should we forget his years as a teacher in Walhalla High School, or his part in the liberation of Paris, for which he was decorated by General DeGaulle. It has often struck me that had Bob not become one of the major humanists of his time—a great teacher, scholar, and presiding officer—there are any number of other things he would have done superlatively well. He would have been a powerful senator or Speaker of the House, a marvelous Secretary of State, a wonderful manager of the New York Mets. He had a rare and altogether unbeatable combination of luminous common sense, sharp intelligence, broad learning, wit, precision, and presence. And as Charles Blitzer pointed out at the ACLS Annual Meeting in April, Bob never changed in any fundamental respect from one decade to the next. We all knew the same man. How fortunate we are to have known that man.

And how fortunate we are to have gotten to know Janet. If our loss is immense, consider what hers must be. Fortunately, she is

remarkably strong, as anyone who lived with Bob Lumiansky would have to be! When I took Bob and Janet to dinner to celebrate their 40th anniversary, I realized, as I am sure that Roland Frye, Paul Korshin, Tom Noble and many others have realized, that knowing them is one of the best things that ever happened to me. I wish I had said so at the time. I salute Janet now, both for herself and for the part she played in Bob's rich and productive life. And I salute Bob who, were he here, would be looking at his watch and shaking his head in amazement at such loquacity. Well so be it, but before I stop I want to say, quite simply, that he was a great man and that we probably will not see his like again in our lifetime.

Robert Raymo
New York University

I knew and admired Bob Lumiansky for many years before he came to New York University. When I heard that he had accepted the presidency of the American Council of Learned Societies, I, as (then) Chairman of the Department of English, invited him to join our faculty. He accepted to our great pleasure and for nearly a decade taught a variety of graduate courses in Middle English literature from the Norman Conquest to Malory, including Chaucer and medieval drama. His reading of Chaucer delighted students particularly, and all were impressed by his mastery and learning. One thing they quickly realized was that Bob demanded of them a serious commitment to scholarship and that for him at least no amount of speculative theory was an adequate substitute for wide and attentive reading.

Bob was a remarkably self-effacing scholar who never drew attention to himself in unwonted ways. But he was professional to the core, and he brought to his teaching and scholarship an exceptional honesty, clarity, and logic. He wrote and spoke to the point and wasted no words. He wrote voluminously and importantly on many of the major works of Old and Middle English literature—Beowulf, the Wanderer, the Owl and the Nightingale, the Alliterative Morte Arthure, the Chester Plays, nearly the entire corpus of Chaucer, and Malory's *Morte Arthur*. He was philologist, editor, critic, translator. It was Malory who called forth some of his finest work, and the last time we spoke he happily described to me the new evidence he had uncovered for the unity of the *Morte Arthur*.

Bob was a significant presence in medieval studies. He was a superb teacher and scholar, a thoughtful and generous colleague, and a very good friend. I mourn his passing.

Elizabeth Pochoda
“*The Nation*”

Many a serious graduate student, especially if she is female, nurtures the idea of composing and starring in a comic masterpiece about, what else, graduate school. Margaret Atwood managed to do this well in *The Edible Woman*. I'm happy to say that R.M. Lumiansky prevented me from doing it very badly. My knives were sharp and ready for the job all right. I had polished the tales of indignity, mine and others', till they shone like bits from the *Decameron*. But before I could begin this revenge fantasy, my student life took an alarming turn for the better. This was Bob Lumiansky's doing. I don't think he found my grievances—the death of my advisor, Rosemond Tuve, my complaints about the fatuity of anyone else who would presume to teach me, my slander of the lamentable souls who already had—very persuasive or especially dignified. Bob simply went about teaching me and the rest of my cohort well. And so we went back to work. Bob was a major believer in work—not just in getting it right but in getting it written. He was also a believer in cooperation; he helped and was not competitive with his students. That was nice and also pleasantly surprising. As was his modesty. So in graduate school, of all places, I learned how to hold a job and how to work with others. I know I learned that from Bob as I clearly hadn't an inkling before.

Whatever mildly frightening face Bob enjoyed showing to the world from time to time, he was, like Chaucer, exceedingly tolerant. Which is not to say that he suffered fools gladly. Having a strong sense of social justice himself, he didn't mind showing a healthy contempt for what he considered the extreme or foolish politics my husband and I embraced as the 1960's wore on into the 1970's. But he was tolerant, as I say, and reserved real, not just feigned, disapproval for whatever was truly meretricious or destructive. In that, again, he was like Chaucer.

So, here's to Bob who was always the same man no matter the circumstances. I know he planned always to remain so and so I think therefore that if he were invited to hear me speak even these few words in tribute to him here, well, wild horses....

John E. Sawyer
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

To my great regret I never knew Bob Lumiansky in his earlier southern years—as an emerging scholar and teacher and young administrator—for I sense it would have been a great pleasure to have shared his thoughts, his conversation, and his company.

Indeed, it has always seemed to me that he and Chaucer were meant for each other, that Chaucer would have welcomed him to the “sondry companie” assembled for the pilgrimage to Canterbury. I am sure Bob would have enjoyed the experience, left us one of the most pungent and interesting tales, and taken special delight in creating a challenge for future scholars.

My acquaintance was limited to the later years in which Bob’s duties as President of the ACLS brought him regularly to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in search of funds over the years 1974-86.

Every foundation officer should always remember that this can be a difficult and often uncomfortable role, perhaps especially so for a distinguished and highly-qualified applicant, however good the cause. A grant-making foundation occupies an anomalous position. Within what is predominantly an exchange economy, it offers a one-way transfer of funds for purposes and recipients of its choosing. Such a relationship does not readily provide a level playing field or natural conditions for candor.

The asymmetry of this relationship has led to a lot of nonsense and some regrettable behavior on both sides—to unreal claims, game-playing, flattery or excesses of deference by applicants; to arrogance, opinionated ignorance, or worse within foundation staffs.

One of the joys of working with Bob Lumiansky over a decade was that there was *never* any nonsense. The needs for which he spoke were real and important. The plans were carefully thought out, with budgets neither padded nor understated to meet those needs. That the Mellon Foundation was able to respond helpfully to most of his requests reflected the merits of the ACLS’ programs, the quality of Bob’s leadership, and the persuasive strength of his own commitment to nurturing the best of the humanities.

Perhaps the most important efforts on which we collaborated were those—his and ours—to sustain the flow of younger talents into the humanities during what was for many humanists a deeply discouraging decade. His dedication to building permanent funding to maintain the core programs of ACLS—notably the fellowships and training and travel grants—made the critical difference at a critical time. And his help and counsel were enormously important to us in planning and implementing a series of programs to assist and advance younger humanists, most recently in launching the Mellon Graduate Fellowships in the Humanities.

Above all, I will always remember Bob's marvelous impatience with all the cant and humbug of modern life; with cumbrous bureaucracies, pompous academics, or self-serving administrators; with inflated prose, or simply bad writing. As someone said of Dean Acheson, "He has a low boring point." It is an impatience we should all forever recall and savor.

The world of humanistic scholarship is deeply in his debt, and those of us who worked with Bob personally are lucky to have known him as a teacher and friend.

Georges May
Yale University

Of the many debts that I have incurred personally toward R.M. Lumiansky the one which probably was the most meaningful and is the most appropriate to recall on this occasion is my own association with the ACLS. About ten years ago, as I was serving as the first delegate of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, he appointed me a delegate to an organization about which I had never heard: the Union Académique Internationale (UAI). If some of you have not heard about it either, you are in good company. In the ensuing years he and his successors have reappointed me uninterruptedly, so that I have now attended ten sessions of this organization. More important yet was Bob's decision, in 1979, to appoint me to fill an unexpired term of two years on the Board of Directors of the ACLS, a body with which I have sat ever since. As you can observe, his actions had a way of being both decisive and long lasting.

Retrospectively I am especially appreciative of his taking the trouble to initiate me in the ways of the UAI, an organization about which I confess I, too, was wholly ignorant prior to being appointed a delegate. Eventually I was to learn that the UAI and the ACLS had been very closely tied together ever since their founding in the same year, 1919.

The UAI clearly meant a lot to Bob who always paid much attention to the international dimension of the ACLS. Whenever he could he attended the annual meetings himself. There were at least two occasions when he and I were delegates at the same time; and my memory of these is particularly vivid because we were able to combine business with pleasure. I am confident Janet and my wife Martha remember these occasions, which they shared with us, with as much keenness, pleasure and nostalgia as I do. In 1981, after the working sessions held in Budapest, the four of us took the train to Vienna, where we spent a few days together sightseeing, fighting for seats to see "The Gypsy Baron" at the Volksoper, venturing into the subway to go to Schoenbrunn, and discovering the remarkably diverse ways in which schnitzels can be prepared. For Bob the Viennese interlude was to be followed by a reunion in Strasbourg with those he called his comrades in arms, a group of French veterans with whom he had served with the U.S. Army during World

War II. He attached great importance to his friendship with these French veterans. Fidelity, as we all know, was one of his many virtues.

In 1983, before the working sessions of the UAI in Copenhagen, the Lumianskys and the Mays took a four-day boat-and-bus trip though lower Norway, from Oslo to Bergen, sightseeing and smorgasbording as we went. Traveling with Bob was never dull and always instructive. He invariably had unexpected, personal and interesting remarks to make on all kinds of subjects, yet always with the self-deprecating humor which was one of his trademarks. But it also could be trying at times, for he was not always as patient and compliant as contemporary mass-transit demands; and, of the various arts that he practiced, relaxation was not one he had fully mastered. Yet the memory of these few days spent touring Europe in his company are now dearer to me than all the innumerable professional encounters we had during his two presidencies.

I assume that my experience in this regard is far from unique, indeed that it is typical, and that it says something significant about the sort of human being he was. Even though I may well be the only one in this room to have drunk Hungarian wine and Norwegian beer with Bob, I am confident that every one of you has memories of the same kind about him, that is, personal ones that have nothing to do with the professional connections which brought us together initially. Few professional associates come close to matching his ability to foster friendship and to humanize the professional by means of the personal.

Of his many virtues, that is perhaps the one I most admire. Not only was he the representative of the humanities, but he was the essence of a human being. These cheerful yet nostalgic memories of the private moments which each of us had the privilege of spending with him do make it in a way easier to face with serenity a future without him.

Stanley N. Katz
American Council of Learned Societies

The citizens who have gone before me have said almost everything that I was planning to say, but of course I particularly want to talk about Bob and ACLS. I did not know Bob as long as most of the people in this room. I first met him when I served on the American Studies Advisory Committee some ten or twelve years ago. I remember keenly the lunches at the Cave Henri IV with Dick Downar at which Bob would review for us the current state of the humanities; I think that was my first inkling that there was such a problem in the world. Here was a person who had done everything and who still evinced the sort of commitment and concern that struck me, a young professor, as quite remarkable. When I was offered the presidency of ACLS a year ago in January, the first thing I did (and I had to request permission from Georges May to do it) was to go and speak to Bob. It wasn't made clear to me whether he knew why I was there, but it was hard to imagine that he didn't. The longest elevator ride I can remember—and this is true even for those of you who know the practicalities of elevators at 228 East 45th Street—was imagining confronting Bob with the knowledge that I might be his successor. It seemed to me a preposterous idea, but of course he never let on what he thought. He was actually sitting in Dick's office because something else was going on in his, with one of those yellow pads on which he was constantly writing in pencil, and he had scratched out about four or five pages of his notions of the problems confronting ACLS. About two hours later we emerged with my having been given an incredibly full account of the history, ups and downs and current status of things at ACLS. He made it quite clear to me without ever having discussed the subject that it was unthinkable that this was a challenge I should not rise to, so we never discussed that matter further. What I remember particularly was the intensity of his discussion of the year 1956, which was in his view the low point in the fortunes of ACLS. Of course, I only realized subsequently that he had told the story as though he had only a tangential role in it, when in fact he was the person, or at least among those persons, most responsible for saving the organization, and then subsequently for bringing it to the very happy situation in which it finds itself now. He was very honest in discussing with me the problems of ACLS—financial, personal,

and of every other kind—and I was quite exhausted when this conversation was over.

I then got the first part of a lesson from Bob that I didn't appreciate at the time. He took me across the street to the Pen and Pencil for a very elegant lunch. It was really quite marvelous. After I had accepted the job we had a second lunch at the Original Gino's Restaurant downstairs, for which I was allowed to pay. This was of course the response of a president of ACLS. I also knew what was expected of me when he ordered because he looked up at the waiter, who clearly knew him, and said, "I'll have the regular." That always leaves your partner in a bad state. At least at Gino's you knew you didn't have to order champagne, but I wasn't sure what I should order. What he had ordered, it turned out, was a cup of split pea soup and a grilled cheese sandwich, and that was what he had every day I had lunch with him at Gino's. Frugality was a very important virtue and a very consistent theme in his relationship with me. Bob believed in it and he practiced it. Every time I use a pencil, as I said in the *Newsletter*, I think of him.

What struck me most about Bob, however, in the fund raising that we began to do together, was the intensity of his commitment to the "core" programs at ACLS. I never knew whether that was his term—I always assumed it was—but he had a passion for those fellowships and for the other grants, particularly those, as Jack Sawyer has said, that would sustain younger scholars. He had a clear view that the central mission of ACLS was to train and sustain scholarly activity. He never deviated from that so far as I know and he certainly made it clear to me that that was the candle that I was to keep alight. I will remain vigilant and faithful I hope to that charge. Bob's strength, it seemed to me in the relatively short period I knew him, was in his intensity and in the narrowness of his vision. He believed in a shrewdly and carefully selected set of virtues; he chose his objectives very carefully; he related them all to an undeviating sense of core values; and, insofar as I could tell, he never deviated from that course.

I know many of you knew him in other contexts, but by the time I knew him ACLS was the center of his life. Without him it is quite clear that not only ACLS would not be what it is today, but much more important, the state of the humanities would not be what it is. He is very personally responsible for that. Joel mentioned NEH. Certainly there is no single individual more responsible for the Endowment, nor for the relations of

the humanistic community with NEH, when, as some of you know, he was not always entirely pleased with what was going on in Washington.

Bob was in my experience a man of incredibly strong and pronounced character. He was shrewd. He was sparing with his words. All these stories have been told already but I cannot omit reminding some of you of a story that I can't even tell: that is, the saltiness of his language and his line about the one-legged man. Some of you will laugh because you remember it and afterwards I will tell all of you the story. He believed in strength of character and I think it was part of his strength. Bob had as many dislikes as likes and I think one of the things I learned from him was that you have to decide what is important and go after it, and be honest about it and true to yourself. He was. I have the feeling always that I consult him still. I know for that reason how he felt about a great number of subjects and when I am tempted to do something else I certainly think twice about it. He was my mentor at ACLS and I will remain forever grateful to him for that.