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2 February 2024

Memorial Resolution in Honor of Professor Robert F. Barnes (1931-2023).

Robert Barnes, Lehigh Professor of Philosophy and Computer Science, died last February at the age of 91. I was Bob's colleague in the Philosophy Department for the last 9 years he spent at Lehigh, they were my own first years. This means I missed fully 21 of the years he devoted to our University, but I tasted enough to know how much I would have enjoyed sharing the whole 30 years he helped Lehigh close out the 20th Century.

By the time I arrived at Lehigh, he had almost achieved one of the things I heard he had quietly worked on for years: getting a university formerly focused on engineering, to commit to building a free-standing Center for the Arts. And he always spoke fondly of something he called the University Forum, a forum of faculty and students of which he was twice the chair. The forum, though always a bit of a mystery to me, came to feel the product of a hope many shared who began their careers in the 1960s, a hope for more democratically organized universities. A hope of which, even this senate, is, in some way, the fruition.

Bob appeared to be interested, amazingly, in everything. He taught Logic and Computer Science and Computer Ethics, but some of our first conversations were about an archeological dig he and his wife Betty had joined in recent summers at an Anasazi site in Arizona.

A mathematical logician, he was concerned to bring the power of logic to students beyond those interested in mathematics. In his era, this was called Practical Logic, and he was part of the first wave of professors who, in this way, took logic to the streets. Now this domain is called Critical Thinking, and there are some states in the union where it is required of every single college student.

He loved learning and was ignited by the touch of new ideas from all over. This was particularly evident in accidental conversations in the living room of the Philosophy Building. Once, in perhaps my first semester here, I found myself embarrassed to be struggling to explain logical quantifiers to my students, I asked him whether it would not be more intuitive to introduce less general quantifiers in my class. Without a whisper of reprimand, he grabbed a yellow pad and explained to me how it would indeed make it easier at the start but that I would finally have to confront the same difficulties I was already having, only a bit later. Always supportive, always generous, and never showing the resentment some academics bring to thoughts foreign to them.

Even after retiring from Lehigh, he continued to attend and read for our philosophy faculty seminar. Always welcoming the chance of thinking with new ideas and new colleagues. If it didn't recall Christmas stories, I would say he always came to philosophical disputes with a twinkle in his eye.

Had I known that in addition to Mathematics, MIT also provided Bob an education in city planning, I would have been prepared for the evident pride he took in the work he performed as president and long-time member of the Borough Council of Fountain Hill, a place he called, simply, the Borough. And while in Bethlehem, he never lived in any other borough, or any other house, than the one on Delaware Avenue where he and Betty raised their children, and in my time, generously entertained the department and visiting philosophy lecturers, in rooms whose walls were festooned with musical instruments.

On one occasion when he entertained me alone, I then learned the immense importance he gave to the making of sauces. He was very serious about sauces, because he was serious about enriching flavors, and savoring the thick joy they bring our souls.

In much the way good a sauce brings out hidden charms in a meal, Bob enriched Lehigh's educational community, bringing to its daily life, his enjoyment of the intellectually new, and the quiet power of his genius for generosity.

Prepared on Behalf of the Department of Philosophy by

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