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Tribute for Herbert O. Reid, Jr., 1946 - 1991

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TRIBUTE FOR HERBERT O. REID, JR.
1946 - 1991*

Every once in a while a gentle breeze blows across the bow of time and in its own way clears the fog so that a ray of sunshine can find its mark.

How often do we pay attention to the gentle breezes. We cannot see the breeze, yet, it brings us the greatest comfort, if only for the short time that it touches, indeed commands, our solemn attention.

It was only in the last six to ten months that Herbert, Jr. and I had one of our periodic discussions on the corner of Van Ness and Connecticut Avenue, not far from the Howard University School of Law. Over the years, we had several discussions--some reaching back to 1969 when he was first hospitalized at Freedman's Hospital.

The last conversation was on the subject of eating habits. I was eating some potato chips when Herbert, Jr. and I met and he laid into me, no, he gave me a lecture on bad food, such as potato chips. I tried disparately to defend myself--after all, this is a free country, I thought, and I can do what I please. But, Herbert, Jr., would hear none of my opinions and was bent on me hearing his. He was a chip off-of-the-old block, I thought.

* Michigan Park Christian Church, Wednesday, April 24, 1991.

There were other occasions in which Herbert, Jr., visited the law school. He sought out old friends for discussion--sometimes--long discussions. Professors Issac Barfield, Henry H. Jones and Ms. Roberta Harris, I'm sure remember Herbert, Jr.'s visits.

Herbert, Jr., had several wonderful qualities, such as that gentle breeze that I described earlier. For example, Herbert, Jr., sought and could get your attention. His eyes, often ablaze with a mixed romantic gleam and those long fingers that were ever in your face as he stood eloquently before you cleverly picking your every opinion apart, were really gentle breezes spouting forth from a gentle, kind and thoughtful human being.

The closest friends of Ann, Herbert, Sr., and Carlene know more than do I that life was "no crystal staircase" for Herbert, Jr. However, no one can deny that he fought against every encroachment on his liberty--his desire to be free, free like that gentle breeze.

Herbert, Jr's., sense of liberty, his fearless desire to be free made him aware that freedom was in knowledge--so he read a lot and prided himself on learning about history and culture. His sensitivity to people, his excessive desire to defend the helpless made him a soul of God's Green Earth.

There is a lot that we owe to Herbert, Jr., including the

research efforts that he contributed in 1973 as Herbert, Sr., Dr. Miles M. Fisher IV, now president of the University of the District of Columbia, and I worked the weekend to complete a brief on behalf of NAFEO in Adams v. Richardson. Though his name is not on the brief, the craftsmanship of his drafts and the sweat of his brow are etched in its pages.

We thank you Herbert O. Reid, Jr. for the gentle breeze that touched us through your life. You cleared a lot of fog from our view so that the sunshine could find its mark.

J. Clay Smith, Jr.
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