

AUGUST 26, 2002



PREPARED REMARKS FOR
DENNIS HERRERA
CITY ATTORNEY OF SAN FRANCISCO

'CELEBRATING ROBERT BARNES'

NORTH LIGHT COURT
SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

TO EVERYTHING I EVER SAW HIM DO IN POLITICS
(AND I SAW HIM DO A *LOT* IN POLITICS) HE
BROUGHT ENORMOUS SKILL, DEDICATION AND
ENERGY.

BUT IT WAS WHAT HE BROUGHT TO LIFE — HIS
LIFE, MINE AND YOURS — FOR WHICH WE TODAY
CELEBRATE OUR FRIEND, ROBERT BARNES.

- HIS IRREVERENT HUMOR
- HIS OUTSIZED HUMANITY
- HIS LOVE OF JUSTICE
- HIS GENEROUS SOUL
- AND HIS INDEFATIGABLE SPIRIT

I FIRST GOT TO KNOW ROBERT IN DEMOCRATIC
CLUB POLITICS DURING THE LATE 1980s, ME
STILL IN MY 20s AND ROBERT ONLY SLIGHTLY
OLDER.

PERHAPS ONLY TO THOSE WHO KNEW HIM WELL — TO
THOSE OF US WHO LOVED AND INSTINCTIVELY
SOUGHT TO PROTECT HIM — ROBERT'S CONFIDENCE
AND SWAGGER IN THOSE DAYS BELIED A SHIER
SOUL ... STILL CARRYING THE FEARS AND
INSECURITIES OF A YOUNGER AGE ... OF A HIGH
SCHOOL TEEN WHO WAS A LITTLE DIFFERENT, A
LITTLE BIGGER, A LITTLE MORE FLAMBOYANT AND
GAY.

THROUGH THE YEARS, WE WORKED TOGETHER OFTEN,
HELPING EACH OTHER AT TIMES BUT ALWAYS
WATCHING ONE ANOTHER GROW.

THROUGH A MAYOR'S RACE IN 1991 IN WHICH I
SUPPORTED ONE — AND ROBERT SUPPORTED NOT
ONE, NOT TWO, BUT THREE SUCCESSIVE LOSING
CANDIDATES.

THROUGH A 1992 POLITICAL SEASON IN WHICH WE
BOTH WORKED HARD TO MAKE SAN FRANCISCO'S
DEMOCRATIC COORDINATED CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS.

WE WENT TO NEW YORK CITY THAT YEAR AS
CONVENTION DELEGATES AND, LATER, HIS ABILITY
TO KEEP ME INFORMED ON THE FINER POINTS OF
LOCAL POLITICS DURING MY TENURE IN
WASHINGTON, D.C. MADE IT SEEM THAT I'D NEVER
TRULY LEFT SAN FRANCISCO.

WHEN I CAME BACK TO THE CITY, WE CONTINUED
WORKING TOGETHER ON A WHOLE HOST OF EFFORTS,
INCLUDING AN ALICE B. TOKLAS DEMOCRATIC CLUB
THAT HE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO MAKE ONE OF THE
LARGEST, MOST RESPECTED POLITICAL CLUBS IN
SAN FRANCISCO.

WE GREW TOGETHER THROUGH CAUSES AND
CAMPAIGNS AND EVEN CLIENTS. AND OUR
FRIENDSHIP TOGETHER SOON EXPANDED TO INCLUDE
ONE ANOTHER'S SPOUSES, ANNE AND CARLOS. IN
FACT, THE NIGHT ANNE GAVE BIRTH TO DECLAN,
IT WAS NO SURPRISE TO EITHER OF US THAT THE
FIRST COUPLE TO SEND THEIR LOVE AND
CONGRATULATIONS — TOGETHER WITH THE BIGGEST
BOUQUET OF FLOWERS YOU EVER SAW — WAS ROBERT
AND CARLOS.

BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL MY OWN CAMPAIGN FOR CITY
ATTORNEY — DURING SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT
DAYS ANNE AND I EVER FACED ...

— AS BRAND NEW PARENTS
— WITH OUR FUTURE AND FINANCES IN UPHEAVAL
— IN THE MIDST OF A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN THAT
OFTEN SEEMED A LONG-SHOT

... THAT I REALIZED HOW MUCH MORE ROBERT HAD
GROWN THAN I.

OVER CHINESE TAKEOUT AT OUR KITCHEN TABLE,
IT WAS ROBERT BARNES WHO LOVED AND
INSTINCTIVELY SOUGHT TO PROTECT *US* ... NURSING
TO *OUR* FEARS AND INSECURITIES ... SHARING THE
STRENGTH OF HIS CONFIDENCE AND SWAGGER TO
GIVE *US* STRENGTH.

ON GAY PRIDE DAY, ROBERT GAVE US ALL A SCARE. FORESHADOWING — AND, PERHAPS, IN SOME WAY PREPARING US — FOR A SAD MOMENT THAT WAS TO COME ALL TOO SOON THEREAFTER.

WITH ROBERT LYING IN A HOSPITAL BED, NEAR DEATH, MATTHEW ROTHSCHILD UNDERTOOK THE SAD TASK OF SUMMONING A CATHOLIC PRIEST — AS SUBTLY AS HE COULD — TO ADMINISTER LAST RITES TO HIS BEST FRIEND.

ROBERT LIFTED HIS HEAD OFF THE PILLOW, PULLED DOWN HIS OXYGEN MASK AND SAID: “MATTHEW, THANK YOU — BUT SEX IS THE LAST THING ON MY MIND RIGHT NOW.”

IT WAS VINTAGE ROBERT: IRREVERENT AND TOPICAL. KEENLY AWARE. COMPLETELY DISARMING.

AND IF IT WAS SACRILEGE IN ANY SENSE, I KNOW THAT GOD HIMSELF COULD NOT HAVE HELPED BUT LAUGH.

ELI WIESEL ONCE SAID THAT, “OUR LIVES NO LONGER BELONG TO US ALONE; THEY BELONG TO THOSE WHO NEED US DESPERATELY.”

HE SAID THAT, "EVERY MOMENT IS A MOMENT OF
GRACE, EVERY HOUR AN OFFERING.

THAT, "NOT TO SHARE THEM WOULD BE TO BETRAY
THEM."

I DON'T KNOW IF HE KNEW THE QUOTE. BUT IN A
LIFE THAT WAS FAR TOO SHORT, ROBERT BARNES
LIVED ITS TRUTH. HE NEVER BETRAYED A
MOMENT, HE NEVER FAILED AN HOUR.

AND THOUGH WE MOURN HIS PASSING, WE
CELEBRATE ROBERT BARNES TONIGHT FOR WHAT HE
BROUGHT TO LIFE — HIS LIFE, MINE AND YOURS.
FOR THAT IS WHAT STILL BELONGS TO ALL OF US.

THANK YOU.