

# Remembering Robert

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## *Remarks by John Edward Todd, 22 September 2018*

There is a poem I used to enjoy reading to my children. In its truncated form, it starts out: Six Blind Men of Industan and each did want to know: What is this thing called elephant? To find one they did go. Well they find one, and the first blind man leans against the side of the elephant and declares that an elephant is like a wall. Another feels the tusk and says it is like a spear. And so on.

As I understand it, the point of the poem was to poke fun at those who engage in passionate theological arguments when none of them has actually seen God. But the poem applies here as well. We are reminded at times like these how little we know about each other. We are all of us blind when it comes to looking inside another person. Some would say we don't even know ourselves all that well, but we know even less about what is inside another person. We know what someone says and what they do. We know how they affect us, but that is not really knowing someone. That is a frustration when we want to honor and remember.

We have each of us been affected by this wondrous comet that blazed through our universe these past 53 years, and we want to honor that privilege we have had. Perhaps the best we can do is to assemble and share our different incomplete versions. Here is mine:

My key word is **Integrity**. Spend any time with Rob, and you sense a strong moral code and – more important – you sensed that it mattered – a lot – to him. More than most, he seemed to live a purpose-driven life. He could have fun – he could exude such joy – but in terms of his values, he didn't take time off.

There are many examples. I will pick just one. I think it is one you will all recognize.

In a gathering, Rob did not “work the room”, looking for advantages or for his own pleasures. He observed the room. He found those in the corners – those who might not be full or easy participants – he sought them out – he brought them in. It might be an old woman in the corner with halting speech and shy manner. It could be a ten year old left out of the play of the other children. HE would be there.

I often thought he viewed the collective enjoyment of the party as a multiplicative function of each person's enjoyment. If anyone had zero enjoyment, then the collective enjoyment was **zero**. I know Rob's mind would not have put it that way, but that is what it looked like to me watching him. It was an inspiration. He was an inspiration because of the way he did such things all of his life.

What legacy does this leave to me? One aspect of his legacy is his artistic work. I will leave it to others to speak of that. The legacy I take is the consideration he had for others – for all others. If, inspired by this example, we all take a little better care of each other, that would be a fitting legacy. I am honored to have known him.