

Remarks for Sociology Senior Dinner – April, 2001

Dan Chambliss

I truly, truly regret not being able to be with you tonight. You, the class of 2001, have a special place in my heart.

You are the largest, the most engaged, certainly the most intellectually accomplished and arguably the single *best looking* class of sociology majors we have ever had at Hamilton College. I have worked directly, at some point in your careers, with every one of you except (lamentably) Sheebra Edwards, and you will never know how proud I am of you. From heart-pounding oral exams, to tea breaks during Advanced Topics, through that very strange Senior Seminar last fall (in which I did very little, but you as a class did a wonderful job), ASA meetings, Hubert Dreyfus visiting Self in Society, track meets, late night study sessions, finagling of various college rules, receptions at the Pub, candidates, thesis proposal presentations, grad school applications, and senior theses, we have grown older together; your spirit has rejuvenated this gray-headed middle-aged professor, and you have a special place in my heart.

I have **two suggestions** to make to you tonight. First, if you attend the Baccalaureate Service this year, pay attention to the *fourth stanza* of the closing hymn, "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past," which is sung every year. The point of the hymn is that eternity is vast, we are very, very small, and may God help us all. The fourth stanza goes like this:

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,

Soon bears us all away.

We fly forgotten, as a Dream

dies at the opening Day.

When our singing reaches, "We fly forgotten..." I usually start crying, as I realize that you, our departing students, are flying from us, almost as a Dream.

But I would add that here, in our tiny world of Hamilton – and I know this from seeing twenty years of students fly – you are not forgotten. Which brings up my second suggestion, preceded by a short fantasy of sorts.

In the study of my home, in a cabinet drawer, I have a box filled with letters, cards, notes, emails, and scribbles that have come to me over the years from students and alumni; they express, as did one last week, various degrees of appreciation for something I did, perhaps inadvertently, that helped them. Sometimes I imagine being very old, retired, wizened and perhaps sick or alone, wondering what my life has amounted to. And I imagine that I will go open that drawer and take out that box; because for a teacher, the contents of that box is indeed what in the end it all amounts to. So I suggest to you – not for me, or for any of us here tonight, but for someone – that the next time you have a little spare time, just write a note to someone, maybe a third grade teacher or a middle school hockey coach, someone, who has made a difference to you, who has helped you. It will

make *all the difference in the world* to them; and you will have done yet another – one of many -- good thing in your life.

Best of luck to you all, and I dearly hope that you all Fare Well.

Dan Chambliss