

THE  
ANCHOR

— Special Issue —

# College Mourns Friend, Scholar Faculty-Student Tributes To Robert T. Amos

By NEIL GALLAGHER

At this time, there is a petition being circulated on campus urging that the new science building be named for the late Dr. Amos. The heading on the petition states:

"We, the undersigned, urge that the new science building be named in honor of the late Dr. Robert T. Amos. We feel that his zealous and fruitful work in expanding the facilities of the psychology department, in addition to his many contributions to the college community, earn for him the honor of a building dedicated to his memory."

Such a dedication would seem fitting indeed as a lasting monument to this truly brilliant scholar. The college community will strongly feel this loss for many years to come, in effect, Dr. Amos is virtually irreplaceable.

One could readily sense this loss by the still pallor that has fallen upon the campus. Since his death, students and faculty

alike have walked about in a trance, not being able to believe that this keen and understanding teacher had passed away. The throngs of sombre and sorrowful people who attended his wake testify to the respect and admiration he evoked from all those who knew him.

In a quiet and informal manner he was a sympathetic and helpful mentor to many who came to him with their personal problems. He would, without exception, pierce a problem to its very roots, ferret out all emotional entanglements to produce a solution both strictly workable and rational. His perspicacity and patience enabled him to examine a problem methodically and to console the troubled person seeking his valuable advice.

But any words seem to fumble in attempting to describe the magnitude and depth of this dynamic scholar. A generation from now there may be few on this campus who still remember the great man, but his kindness and counsel will live indelibly in the minds of those who knew him:

God grant that we may all emulate such a man!

By LILLIAN D. BLOOM

On the first day of the New Year my friend Robert Amos died. His death was swift and without any apparent pain—the easiest of all possible deaths and yet the loneliest. Paradoxically, his loneliness embraced only a breath-holding, time-suspended moment. Mine endures and will endure as long as loneliness can be measured by the ticking of the clock.

Robert Amos was so vital, so compassionate a man that I find it difficult to write of him in the past tense. The tense itself connotes that which is over, finished, done with. But only grammatically is Robert Amos of the past. I shall not — because I cannot—place him in the context of death. It is as foreign to the substance of the man as shadow is to sunlight.

I met Robert Amos on my first teaching day at Rhode Island College. It was a prickly, uneasy time for me, a time of self-doubt and uncertainty. Sensing this, Robert Amos sauntered over. His voice was casual, even lazy, with its typically wholesome sneer. "Professor," he said, "I'm Amos." I didn't feel very professional



then, and I don't today. But from then on, for seven years, I was always "the Professor;" he always "Amos." Strange, isn't it, that our reference to each other, so seemingly brusque and impersonal, should have helped to sustain a friendship which is not yet over?

A friend is to be enjoyed. And I enjoyed Amos. I enjoyed sitting between him and my husband at football games. Amos relished football with a passionate intensity. And that which he relished he wanted to share with others. So he would explain intricate plays to me. And always with infinite patience, unwilling to admit to himself or at least to me that in the presence of complex football maneuvers I was incorrigibly dim-witted. I still don't understand football and I probably never will; but I understand the instinctive generosity and kindness of Amos.

I enjoyed the profound honesty of Robert Amos. It was so consistent an honesty, embracing details small and trivial and yet pursuing unanswerable metaphysical truths. Amos clung to his southern accent; he wore it like a badge. For to alter it, he claimed, would be a repudiation of that heritage which caused him suffering even as it gave him nobility and the strength to endure.

Amos hated phoniness in all its uneasy, distorted images. He hated religious hypocrisy when it sought to impose its rigidity on others. He hated false social gentility when it parasitically flowered upon another's humiliation. He hated fraudulent intellectuality when it searched not for truth but for the expansion of ego. Above all else, he hated man's greed for power when it persecuted and forced compliance at the expense of individual integrity. Amos was a magnificent hater; and in that passion of negation he expressed his positive love for creativity, whether of man or of God.

I enjoyed Amos' robustness, his virile regard for good-looking people, for attractive clothes, for martinis so cold they

frosted the glass. He was at his best in the middle of a large and crowded party. Then, gregarious and sociable, he was able to lose himself in the sophisticated, impersonal conversation that flowed about him. Then he astonished with his capacity for good talk, with his vast gift of sympathy, with his earthy good taste.

I enjoyed his ability to cuss out a gadget civilization when the gimmicks wheezed and stalled and whined to a mechanical death. Rarely profane and certainly never blasphemous, he could yet address a flat tire or a stalled car motor with a verbal rage that approached the gift of tongues. In many ways Amos was a Don Quixote tilting at a world's orneriness.

And I enjoyed his laughter, a courageous laughter that repressed gaiety even as it bespoke a moral earnestness. Amos did not laugh easily or lightly. Laughter to him was too serious, too philosophically real, to be wasted on the merely comic. Through laughter he derived the satiric insight to reduce to proper puniness human insensitivity which victimized and mangled. Laughter was for Amos a form of militant prayer, making clear that ultimately evil must fall before an impregnable spiritual goodness.

But most of all I enjoyed my friend's capacity to love. His was not a sticky, sentimental emotion that demanded audience and tribute, that cloyed before it satisfied. In Amos love was an intellectual power which revealed itself in a witty tenderness to students, in a critical loyalty to colleagues. Never forgetting his background or the needs of his people, Amos built his world at Rhode Island College. And that world he animated by his zestful participation, his humor and his knowledge.

For one who liked the deliberate, even the ceremonious farewell, he left altogether too abruptly. But he had a long way to go this time and he could not wait to say goodbye. That is about as close as Amos ever came to being discourteous.

## From The Anchor

The *Anchor*, as well as the rest of the College community and the Rhode Island community has lost a good friend. As a faculty member who was truly concerned with students and student affairs, Dr. Amos was always ready to help, to give advice, or to just sit back for an hour-long discussion. There is not one person associated with Rhode Island College who is not, or will not, be affected by his untimely death. We shall miss his keen mind, his sharp wit, his visits to the *Anchor* office, his encouragement, his booming laugh, and his moral support.

## Productive Life Terminated By Untimely Death

After Dr. Robert T. Amos failed to report for classes last Wednesday, and not having heard from him, a faculty member went to his apartment. Dr. Amos was found dead on the floor beside his desk, apparently having been stricken while working.

Dr. Amos was chairman of the psychology department and acting chairman of the division of professional studies. He came to Rhode Island College in 1956 as an assistant professor, and was appointed chairman of the newly-formed psychology department last February.

Prior to coming to RIC, Dr. Amos taught psychology at Howard University for four years. He also taught in high schools in Oxford, N. C., and was a psychologist at the State Teachers' College in Bowie, Maryland.

A graduate of Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina, he received his master of arts degree and his doctorate at the University of Michigan. Active in civic and professional organizations, Dr. Amos was a member of the American Psychology Association, the R. I. Mental Hygiene Assoc., and the Providence Child Guidance Clinic.

Dr. Amos showed a great interest in students and in student groups. He was known most for his work with Kappa Delta Phi but spent many of his hours with other college groups.

Burial services were held in Oxford, North Carolina.

**Memorial services will be held Thursday, January 10 in Roberts Hall. Classes will be cancelled from 10:30 to 11:30 so that students may attend. The speaker will be Rev. Charles Baldwin, chaplain at Brown University.**

## His Great Contribution To Rhode Island College

By WILLIAM C. GAIGE

Every human being has his distinct individuality, not reproducible, and replaceable only as other persons are born and mature as different individuals. Robert Amos was a splendid and remarkable individual. After a long, diligent search for a highly qualified educational psychologist, I found him nearly seven years ago at a conference at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago. Two months later, in my home here in Providence, I sat with him as he made the difficult decision to leave a secure position at Howard University in Washington, a distinguished school, to come to Rhode Island College.

Dr. Amos brought with him a uniquely splendid background to share in the education of teachers. He was educated as a teacher, and he taught in the public schools. He also taught in a teacher's college. At the University of Michigan he was a director of a graduate dormitory. He did these things prior

to his becoming the first chairman of the psychology department and acting chairman of the division of professional studies here at Rhode Island College. We, his colleagues, came to learn, as he showed us the high possibilities of individuality, that he had one of the finest minds among us.

Perhaps for Dr. Amos he had accomplished his life's purpose, for he was no longer lonely. He was performing his teaching and administrative functions superbly. By his life among us, he had demonstrated his internal ability so to live as to give promise that mankind can rise above his prejudices to true brotherhood. This is the greatest of teaching. Rhode Island College, students and faculty alike, has suffered a great loss. There is no other like him among us. Yet, through the mysteries of God's Will, perhaps there inheres in the combination of Dr. Amos' living among us and so suddenly leaving us his greatest possible contribution to us.