

8-22-12

### Owsley Frazier Eulogy

Last Thursday August 16<sup>th</sup> my more than four decade friendship with a marvelous man, at least in this life, came to an end. Owsley Brown Frazier a most uncommon man who loved the common man was a precious gift to all who had the honor of knowing him. From afar he was a giant, a big man in girth, voice, bearing, accomplishment and reputation. To many he must have seemed awesome and distant. In reality he loved people regardless of their station, and treated all with equanimity. No one I have ever known could have cared less about a person's faith, gender, or race than Owsley. In the best sense he was a true civil libertarian.

Owsley had a heart as big as the Grand Canyon. His philanthropy was predicated on his love for sharing and commitment to cause. He was so generous some joked that one time Owsley wrote such a big check to support a cause in which he believed that the bank bounced. But at the end of the day this was a guy who was a man's man, someone who reveled in fellowship and friendship. Owsley was A fine gentleman but he was no "goody two shoes". We first met at the old Mayflower Hotel when he was elected to the original University of Louisville Associates board known around town as the ULAS'. That was one dickens of a group. Many of the names are also community legends, Innes Dobbins, Bernie Dahlem, Teter Carroll, Norm Iler, Otto Knoop, Bob Allison, Dick Panther, Dr Frank Shipman and a young coach named Denny Crum. We worked but boy how we played. Our meetings accomplished more than any I have been part of before or since. U of L had a skeleton of its current athletic department in those days so our group took on much of what is now handled by professional staff. However the meetings also were late night vigils of companionship, after which Owsley and I who usually went together, would weave our way home in the late hours. Owsley was a young Brown Foreman executive in those days, not the regionally acknowledged civic titan he became. . The guys loved him, not for what he had, but for who he was. In those days he gave sweat equity rather than dollars, and the boys recognized that when in a few years they elected him their chairman. It all culminated in 1980 when our fellow Board member Denny Crum coached the Cardinals to their first NCAA title. When we embraced under Market Square Arena after the game, I will forever remember the look of pure joy and happiness on Owsley's most welcoming face.

What a sense of humor he had. The term rapier wit was invented for Owsley. For those of you who just knew him in his later years really missed the prime of one of the sharpest men you could ever encounter. Always ready to go to a sporting event at the drop of a hat whenever we could scrape up tickets, we had some unique times on road trips. Our travels got us uncomfortably lost in an IU sorority house where we thought we were meeting the daughter of a friend, and once we unexpectedly landed on the less than discreet streets of Juarez Mexico. Yes one of the great philanthropists of our time was really human.

There was also the aesthetic side of Owsley who appreciated and understood beautiful things. He loved gardens, architecture, objects of elegance and history. He would needle me on many occasions that he was determined to teach me couth and culture. My wife Mary says he failed. Bittners, his home, and the Frazier museum are evidence of this part of Owsley's complex and deep personality.

Many here remember the bright red Mark IV with white wall tires which we called his menopause mobile. He preferred a great steak house with a solid drink to the daintiness of designer food accompanied by exotic wine. He had simple tastes not typical of people of his magnitude. As I have said, a guy's guy. But make no mistake Owsley Frazier was brilliant.

Not many have great second careers but Owsley was one of the few. Think of the imagination and creativity it took to give birth to the Frazier Historical Museum, one of the best of its kind in the world. Many times when visiting at the Avish he would show Mary and I objects he was collecting for his future museum. One evening Mary fell over a long box on the floor of his TV den. Owsley told her she just tripped on Teddy Roosevelt's Big Stick. What a visionary. The Frazier Museum is a gift that will keep on giving to our town for generations..

Others know so much more about his great contributions to Brown Foreman but I did know from college days one of the principals of one of the companies' prime distributors, Empire in Atlanta. Those folks absolutely loved Owsley and when he hit their town he was not a visiting salesman, he was the center of a celebration.

Owsley loved U of L, its academics and athletics. While his support for the major programs, football and basketball are obvious, he relished helping women achieve in sports and that was evidenced by his leadership in developing Cardinal Park as well as his special relationship with softball coach Sandy Pearsall. He also injected so much excellence into the academic side of U of L. Bellarmine was also a major passion of his. If you walk around that growing and beautiful campus you see evidence of Owsley's influence everywhere.

Owsley was a patriot helping many of our greatest leaders both local and national, achieve office. President George W Bush, Senator's Mitch McConnell and Jim Bunning, Congresswoman Ann Northup, County Judge Rebecca Jackson, and Governor Ernie Fletcher are among those upon who he bestowed his friendship. Those leaders will all tell you the same thing, Owsley always stood up when called upon, but never asked for anything in return.

At the end of the day it was Owsley the father and grandfather that mattered the most. He loved his family without reservation, and those who follow now have the task of carrying forward his life's efforts of accomplishment with honor.

As friends how we will all miss the laughs, the Christmas dinners, the many games, the companionship, and his just being there that we have been blessed with for years. Stay safe old pal, someday we will be all going to that ultimate stadium together. Owsley Brown Frazier was a man who at his core represented human decency. If the Lord had to bestow great resources upon someone roaming this earth to be his agent for good, he picked the perfect person in my buddy, Owsley Brown Frazier.