Text of Paul Gray’s remarks for Ron McNair memorial services

(Editor’s note: the following is the text of the eulogy to Ronald E. McNair PhD ’76 delivered by President Paul E. Gray ’54 Wednesday.)

I begin with the words of the poet, Stephen Spender:

I think continually of those who were truly great. Born of the sun they ventured a short while into the world and left the world signed with their honor.

We come together today to remember — and to comfort each other in our remembering. Anyone who knew Ron McNair will tell you that truly was born of the sun. His brief time with us was one of stellar achievement, bright purpose, clear vision, and dreaming that appealed to everyone.

As one of the sons of MIT, Ron stood out in that great company of self-starting high achievers. He set extraordinary standards for himself — higher than anyone else would dare set for him — and then met and exceeded those standards. He did so through patient hard work, through a firm and shining belief in his capacity to achieve his dreams, and through an indomitable spirit.

The promise he represented for future leadership — national leadership — in a nation with too few heroes, was evident to all who knew him. As we look at the corner of aspiring leaders on the national scene, how many hold within themselves the integrity, the wisdom, the judgement, and the personal achievement that we came to expect of this man.

Ron understood instinctively that he represented, for a whole generation of younger people at MIT and around the nation, a symbol, a shining example of what dedication and risk-taking and hard work and faith and self-confidence could achieve. He was very generous in sharing with us his experience and his perspective. He was at MIT several times following his first shuttle flight in 1984, and his rapport with students here — indeed with all who

Text of Feld’s remarks

(Editor’s note: the following is a text of remarks made by Michael S. Feld ’63 at the memorial service for Dr. Ronald E. McNair Ph.D. ’76.)

Two weeks ago, in a terrible blinding flash, the lives of seven outstanding young people were consumed. One of them was Ron McNair.

For the eight years from 1969 to 1976, Ron’s cheerful presence brightened the gray basement halls of MIT. He has literally brightened the grey basement halls of MIT, has literally consumed. One of them was Ron McNair.

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